BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

T.R.DEOGIRIKAR

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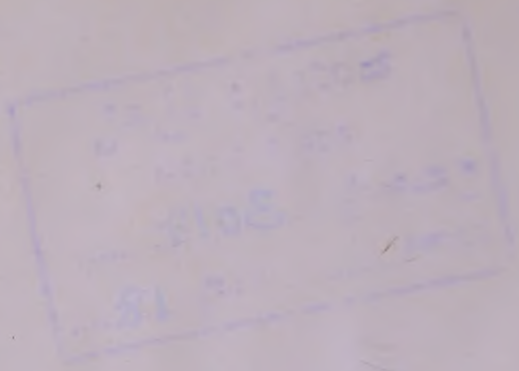

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Public life must be spiritualized. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of the series is the publication of biographies of those eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the struggle for independence.

It is essential for the present and coming generations to know something about these great men and women. Except in a few cases, no authoritative biographies are available. The series has been planned to remove this lacuna and comprises handy volumes containing simple and short biographies of our eminent leaders written by competent persons who know their subject well. The books in this series are of 200 to 300 pages each and are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace more elaborate biographies.

Though desirable, it may not be possible to publish the biographies in chronological order. The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to persons who are well equipped to do so and, therefore, for practical reasons, it is possible that there might be no historical sequence observed. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.

Shri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of this series.

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1

The Background

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE was born in an epoch of Indian history which formed him and which he himself lived to form in a large measure. He was born nine years after the Great Indian Uprising of 1857, also known as the First War of Indian Independence. He was a young man when the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 to achieve India's freedom by constitutional agitation, with the stress on the word 'constitutional'. He died five years before Mahatma Gandhi, who looked upon him as his 'political guru', began his first attempt at non-violent resistance on Indian soil.

In 1858 the rule of the East India Company came to an end, and a new era began with Queen Victoria's Proclamation of that year. The new order of things demanded new concepts, new ways of thinking and new departures in the political, social, economic and educational fields.

A new spirit was abroad in the country. It was a period of challenge to thinking Indians. They felt that India's traditions, her culture, her history, her social order, her religion, in short everything Indian, were being uprooted. British rule had brought them poverty, British rule had emasculated them, and British rule had made them slaves. How were Indians to regain India's lost glory and her lost soul ?

The British put forth their own explanation of India's bon-

dage. They lost no time in impressing on Indians that their backwardness in social customs, their caste distinctions, the treatment accorded to women, and many other evils, real or imaginary, had contributed to their fall.

This was only partly true. The British analysis of the causes of the loss of Indian freedom, therefore, was not accepted by all. Nevertheless, a mood of questioning set in. The outlook of the intelligentsia underwent a transformation. All their attention was focused on reforming the social structure before the Indian National Congress was founded, and for a few years later. There were associations like the Bombay Presidency Association, the Calcutta Association, the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona, and the Mahajana Sabha of Madras, working in the political field before the advent of the Indian National Congress but social reform was the cry of the day. Social reform must precede political emancipation : this was the ardent view of the advocates of social reform. There was another equally strong group which sought to separate politics from social change. The differences between the two schools of thought were sharp, sometimes acrimonious even.

There was also an important group in the country which thought that India's political fall was due to deterioration in the moral and spiritual fibre of the people. The message of Hinduism was carried far and wide by Swami Vivekananda and others. Missions came to be established in India and abroad for restoring spirituality to its proper place in the national life. This message served the purpose of eliciting respect for India amongst outsiders, and of giving hope and strength to the people. It should be admitted that the attempt succeeded to a large extent in changing our outlook on the values of life and in fostering feelings of nationality and brotherhood. Most important of all, the feeling arose that without sacrifice and suffering nothing could be achieved, not even social progress. Patriotism, spirituality, sacrifice and suffering came to be looked

upon as the means of achieving the end of freedom.

The national background at the time was this : the change from the East India Company's rule to direct British rule was not only material but substantial. The East India Company consisted mostly of men who did not care much for the future of India. Direct British rule at least aimed at the rule of law, orderly and constitutional. Indians in those days could clearly see that their British opponents were men of no mean order.

The struggle against British rule had to be along constitutional lines. No one doubted the limits of constitutional agitation and its achievements. The other method, terrorism as practised in Russia, Ireland, Italy and other countries, was not looked upon as one that would succeed. The only way left open to fight the foreign rulers, it was felt, was to fight them with their own weapons. Till the coming of Gandhiji, Indian political leaders, nursed on the ideals of British liberalism, relied mostly on the constitutional methods as they understood them. Naturally the leadership went to those who were versed in law. But agitation without the widest participation of the people seldom leads to success. That nation-wide backing was supplied to the agitation by the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The founding of the Congress ensured that leadership did not sink to the individual or local level but became, as it did, truly national. Thus the initiative in all constitutional agitation rested with that parent organization.

From 1885 to 1915, for about 30 years, the Congress and the country were confronted with many trials and tribulations. The constitutional method was sufficiently experimented upon but the goal was never within reach, though some progress towards it was made.

In the course of the national struggle there were frequent occasions for disappointment, frustration and heart-burning.

The rulers, on the one hand, tried to tighten their rule with all the weapons in their armoury; on the other, the awakened people struggled to get out of this grip. A day came when the people grew impatient with the conservative and apparently futile methods pursued by the leaders and looked to a real confrontation.

The declaration of freedom as the national goal, and direct action in one form or another, followed in consequence. Even if constitutional methods were to succeed, they must be spearheaded by direct action. Thus, though the method of conservative agitation was laid down by the Congress, more emphasis came to be laid on other forms of agitation. Differences arose within the Congress. One group relied primarily on the sanctity and inviolability of the constituted set-up and the other on the group's own inherent strength, its actions and the pressure of public opinion, though that group also did not depart from constitutional methods.

For some years the Congress spoke with one voice but that voice changed with changing circumstances and demands of the times. Ultimately a split came and the extremist leaders were thrown into prison by the Government. With the removal from the scene of the extremist section a void was created in the country and the Congress. The Congress was now controlled by the moderates but it lacked lustre and inspiration. Till the declaration of the First World War and some months thereafter, the Congress was practically in the wilderness. This situation underwent a welcome change not long after.

Such were the times and the social and political *milieu* in which Gokhale lived and worked. His career began in the field of education and ended on the chess-board of constitutional agitation. His courage, sincerity and singleness of purpose have inspired Indians. Gokhale played his role faithfully, steadfastly, never faltering from the path he chose: he was never

deflected from his ideals by the vicissitudes of a political career. His was a life of dedication : love of India, to quote his own words, so filled his heart that he became a true servant of India. Failure did not dishearten him, success did not elate him. Like a true *karmayogi* he worked to the end of his life.

During the last century, India, in spite of her loss of freedom, produced several eminent men who shaped the destinies of this ancient country. Very few countries can claim a similar roll-call of great men and women—thrown up in so short a period. In arts, science, history, education, economics, industry, politics and religion India presented to the world great and gifted men. They laid sound foundations for the bright future of this country.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born amongst these great men and women who strove for the fulfilment of India's destiny. His characteristic contribution to rapidly changing India was the method of constitutional agitation.

2

The Man in the Making

GOKHALE WAS BORN on May 9, 1866 at a village called Kotluk in Ratnagiri district of the old Bombay Presidency. The Gokhale family originally belonged to a village called Velaneshwar in that district. His forefathers moved to an adjoining village, Tamhanmala, obviously for economic reasons.

The family owned some landed property which was carefully managed. But the holdings in Ratnagiri district are not very fertile for food crops, nor large in acreage. It is a hilly district. Though the annual rainfall is more than 80 inches on an average, much of it drains to the sea, leaving little for cultivation during the rest of the year. A coastal district, Ratnagiri has enchanting scenery. It is a fruit growing area : mango, cocoanut, cashewnut and jack fruit abound. But the means of communication, even now not plentiful, were negligible in those days. The last hundred years have not witnessed the advent of the railway system in the area. The coastal traffic continues to be carried on by means of boats and other countrycraft.

Gokhale came of a middle class family which was somewhat well off. 'Waste not, want not' is generally the motto of the caste to which Gokhale belonged, the Chitpavan Brahmins, much misrepresented by writers like Sir Valentine Chirol. The Chitpavan Brahmins have certain distinctive characteristics. They are practical and ambitious, personable and industrious.

By dint of these qualities, the Chitpavan Brahmins, although numbering but a few hundred thousands have come to the forefront in many walks of life. The Peshwas who ruled Maharashtra for over a hundred years were Chitpavan Brahmins who went to Poona from Shrivardhan in Kolaba district. Ratnagiri district in particular has produced noteworthy leaders of Maharashtra and of India.

Gokhale's father Krishnarao had sought service in Kagal, a small feudatory state in Kolhapur State. He was employed there as a clerk and later became a sub-inspector of police; the salaries in the Princely states in those days were very meagre. Krishnarao's wife came from Kotluk and belonged to the Oke family. They had six children, of whom two were boys. The elder was named Govind and the younger Gopal. It is clear that Gopal Krishna Gokhale inherited his uprightness and habits of unselfish application from his family. He guarded this heritage scrupulously and left it richer for his life and career.

Very little is known about Gopal's school life in those early years, or his education at home. His mother was not educated; she could not have been in those days. But, in the manner of many unlettered women she was full of wisdom and traditional knowledge. Stories from the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were on her lips. So were the devotional songs of the saints and seers. Songs full of piety, love and ardour were sung early in the morning and late at night in the Gokhale household, diffusing purity and love. The impress left by these influences could be discerned in Gokhale in later years.

The house where Gopal was born, the school where he had his early education, the teachers who taught him, his comrades and friends in school, all are unknown. It is a matter of regret that no one has been able to throw light on this part of his life. All that we know about the boy at Kagal is that he

completed his elementary education there. There is an anecdote, repeated in the biographies, to which a reference should be made. Once his teacher set the boys a piece of home-work in arithmetic. The answers of the other boys were wrong, only Gopal's was correct. The teacher asked him to move up to the top of the class. Instead of rejoicing over his promotion, he burst into tears. No one could understand the reason till out came the confession that the piece of home-work had been solved not by him but by someone else.

It must have been in 1874-75 that Gopal was sent to Kolhapur along with his brother for further studies. Kolhapur was the capital of a Princely state of the same name and was near Kagal. In those days only the larger towns like Kolhapur had schools teaching English.

While the brothers were at Kolhapur, news came of the death of their father. Gopal was only 13 and his brother Govind 18. In a family of moderate means the demise of the earning member should normally have meant interruption of the boys' studies. But Gopal's uncle, Antaji, took the widowed mother and her four daughters to Tamhanmala, though he himself was poor and had to maintain his own family. After a few months Gopal's mother returned to Kagal with her daughters, determined to face the world on her own. In the altered circumstances it was settled that the elder brother should give up his education, and take up work, while the younger would stay on at Kolhapur and complete his education. Through the good offices of relations, the elder was employed in a post at Kagal carrying Rs. 15 a month. It must have been very difficult for him to maintain the family and to provide for the education of his brother on such a low salary. Govind, who was only 18, agreed to send Rs. 8 out of the 15 rupees he was earning for the education and maintenance of Gopol at Kolhapur. It must have meant a hard life all round, full of self-denial. Gopal knew this well. It

strengthened him in his resolve to make the best of this opportunity to succeed in life.

Out of Gopal's monthly allowance of Rs. 8, Rs. 4 went for food in an eating-house; the balance was spent on fees, books and clothes—an austere but character-forming life. He was conscious of the sufferings of his family and spent every pie with scrupulous care.

Once a class-mate asked him to go with him to a dramatic performance. Gopal agreed, went with him and witnessed the performance. After a day or two his friend asked him to pay for the ticket. Gopal was taken aback. If he had known that the show was going to cost him money, he would have courteously refused both the company and the pleasure. But self-respect asserted itself. He paid his friend the sum of two annas without argument or resentment. How was he to balance his budget ? Could he give up one more meal ? Could he lay the axe on some other necessity ? He decided to save on the kerosene needed for his lamp. He went out into the street and read his books under the street lamp.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale passed the matriculation examination at the age of 15. But he had been prevailed upon to marry even before that. The celebration of a marriage in the straitened circumstances of the family cannot be understood unless it is borne in mind that early marriages were the norm in those days. Society had not advanced far enough for anyone to disregard such a custom.

Young Gokhale got through his entrance examination at the first attempt. He won no scholarship and his name did not appear among the top-ranking students. The only notable fact is the comparatively early age at which he passed the examination. Although he had the desire, the ambition and the capacity for further studies, he thought it selfish to keep

the family constantly in want for the sake of his higher education. He expressed a desire to start earning so as to cease to be a burden. But Govind would not hear of it and Govind's wife would not hear of young Gopal making such a sacrifice. She came forward with the offer to part with all her ornaments and jewellery for his education : Gokhale was to join college. The country is indebted to Govind and his wife for giving Gokhale this opportunity to equip himself for the mission that awaited him in the country.

Gokhale joined the Rajaram College at Kolhapur in January 1882. He was a shy student. Nothing much is known about his activities in college. He was alert but not brilliant.

He quickly gained a reputation in his college for exceptional retentiveness of memory. Srinivasa Sastri says, "Often he would lend a text-book to a mate and ask him to hold it while he went on reciting by heart. There used to be a bet, it would appear, that he should pay down an anna for every slip he made. Nobody made a fortune out of his mistakes."

Although mastery of the English language was not one of his ambitions, any more than that of the young men of his time, he learnt to use it with sensitiveness and ability. His way was to commit good passages to memory. He could quote chapter and verse without a single mistake. It is said that he knew the whole of Scott's *Rokeby* by heart. Some of his fellow students would tease him, calling him a crammer and a parrot, but Gokhale did not mind this.

In the Rajaram College he passed his Previous examination, as it was then called, in 1882. For the second year's course he had to go to the Deccan College at Poona. But his stay in the Deccan College was short as the Rajaram College soon started the second year's course. He studied the first year of his B.A. course also in Kolhapur and then went

to the Elphinstone College in Bombay for the final examination. He took mathematics as his optional subject and secured a second class.

That was in 1884. About 1880 very important events happened in Poona. The New English School was started by Vishnooshastri Chiplunkar. Next year, two weeklies, *Kesari* in Marathi and *Mahratta* in English, were started by Chiplunkar, Tilak, Agarkar and other young men. Certain letters were published in *Mahratta* on January 8, 1882, against one Barve, the Dewan of Kolhapur. *Kesari*, too did not spare the Dewan. Tilak and Agarkar were sentenced to four months' imprisonment for defaming the Dewan as the letters ultimately turned out to be forged. The public sympathized with the editors and a fund for their defence was started. Students came out to collect the money. The New English School and the Deccan College raised about Rs. 400 for the fund. The Rajaram College of Kolhapur could not well lag behind. The students of the college staged a play in aid of the fund, Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. Young Gokhale, who had remained aloof from all extra-curricular activities till then, agreed to play the part of the abbess in the play. This was his first appearance in public as a sympathizer in a political cause.

In Bombay, where he went to study for his final examinations, Gokhale was attracted by Professor Hawthornwaite who was a renowned teacher in mathematics and a helpful guide. Dr. Wordsworth, Professor of English, was another celebrity in the teaching world then. The two Englishmen influenced Gokhale greatly; they in turn were pleased with his accomplishments. He secured a scholarship of Rs. 20 a month.

Gokhale was admitted to the B.A. degree in 1884 at the age of 18, a rare achievement in those days. There were various

choices before him. Should he register his name for the M.A. degree ? Should he enter Government service ? Should he join the law classes and become a lawyer ? Some of his friends suggested that he should go to England to sit for the I.C.S. competitive examination. They promised to raise a loan for the purpose but Gokhale did not like the idea. It is possible that he thought that he was not equal to the task. Or possibly, he did not like the service. His final choice fell on engineering and he even enrolled his name in the Engineering College. But when he saw how talented some of his class-mates were, diffidence overcame him again and he stopped attending the classes. A plain M.A. degree holding no attraction, he finally turned to law. To be a lawyer in those days was socially honourable and economically remunerative. One could even hope to enter the judiciary and become a High Court Judge, the highest position of eminence open to Indians then. A knowledge of law was desirable for other purposes as well. Gokhale might even have looked upon it as the right training ground for one who sought to serve his country.

Although he joined the law classes which started that year in the Deccan College at Poona, Gokhale could not forget his family which had gone through so much for him. How long was he to keep them waiting for better days ? Earning a living, therefore, became a necessity and a duty. Gokhale decided to accept the post of a teacher in the New English School, Poona, on a salary of Rs. 35 a month.

3

The Stormy Years Ahead

GOKHALE'S LIFE WAS inextricably mixed up with the events that were happening in Poona. When Gokhale chose the profession of teaching he had little idea of deliberately throwing himself into the vortex of events. But little by little he came to be a part of all that went on in Poona. Although he did not proclaim any flaming passion in fiery words, Gokhale in his own quiet way was as determined as his colleagues in the New English School on what the country needed.

For, the school in which he worked as a teacher was no ordinary school. It was not meant to turn out men who would be glorified clerks in the service of the foreign rulers. On the contrary, the founders of the school were persons determined to train a band of people rich in self-respect, learning and a sense of dedication. It was for such an institution that Gokhale laboured for no less than 15 years.

The architect of this school was Vishnooshastri Chiplunkar. He was a graduate who belonged to Poona. While in government service he was transferred to Ratnagiri from Poona as a teacher and was getting Rs. 100 a month, a decent salary in those days. He edited *Nibandhmala*, a periodical, in which thought-provoking articles appeared. It had caught the imagination of the educated class. In one of the essays, 'Amachya Deshachi Sthiti' (the condition of our country), he expressed the opinion in unequivocal terms that education was the only

way to regenerate the country. The essay was banned by the Government later as certain passages in it were considered highly objectionable. Chiplunkar decided to resign from service and start a school at Poona. The school came into existence in the first month of 1880.

Tilak and Agarkar had also been thinking along the same lines even while studying in the Deccan College. India could only become free when her people were educated on modern lines : modern science, modern arts and modern ways of thinking alone would enable them to throw off the foreign yoke. Tilak remarked of himself and Agarkar that "their heads reeled with the depraved condition of the country, and that after prolonged thinking they had come to the conclusion that the uplift of the country depended upon education alone". Tilak and Agarkar expressed a desire to join Chiplunkar's new venture. Some ridiculed them and called them visionaries. But the student world at large was waiting for the golden dawn. Chiplunkar said, "Rather than bend the knee to tyranny, I would snap asunder the chains once and for ever." The response to his pioneering attempt was splendid. Students vied with one another in enrolling their names. But the Government looked askance at this move. Chiplunkar showed prudence in not using high-sounding words while describing the object of the school in the opening address. He simply said that the object was to promote education by making it available even to persons of modest means. Chiplunkar, Tilak and Namjoshi took up the work. Agarkar did not join the school in the beginning as he wanted to complete his M.A. studies and asked for time.

Sacrifice and self-abnegation were necessary if the new venture was to succeed. The salary of these enthusiastic young men was only Rs. 30 to 35 a month. When more money was available they would start a chain of schools in Maharashtra but would not enhance their salaries. The ideal of sacrifice was

thus both preached and practised. Poona was much taken up with the experiment. The Fergusson College was started in March 1885, the same year in which the Indian National Congress came into existence.

Gokhale was appointed as an assistant teacher on Rs. 35 a month in the New English School. That was too small a sum for his large family to live upon. He, along with a teacher friend, started private classes for coaching students appearing for the Public Service examinations. Gokhale made about the same amount from these classes as his regular salary. An income of Rs. 70 or Rs. 75 a month was considered fairly handsome for a graduate eighteen years of age. Any spare time he had went for his legal studies. He passed the first examination. As there was no further provision for studying law at Poona he used to go to Bombay to attend the Law College every weekend. But though he cherished the desire to be a lawyer, circumstances did not allow him to pursue law studies much longer.

The atmosphere in which his lot had been cast began to influence him profoundly. He came in contact with stalwarts like Tilak and Agarkar who were very ardent patriots. Subsequent events were to prove that Agarkar had greater influence on him than had Tilak. It was Agarkar, not Tilak, who prevailed upon him to join the staff as a life-member and be one amongst them. In the beginning Gokhale seems to have hesitated somewhat, not because he did not want to join them but because his brother might object. Soon his brother's consent was obtained and Gokhale joined the ranks of these earnest persons in 1886. The foundation of his future was laid.

Before considering Gokhale's career as a teacher, we may mention that in 1885 Gokhale delivered his first public lecture at Kolhapur, Mr William Lee Warner, the Resident at Kolhapur, presiding. The subject was 'India under the British Rule'.

Gokhale captivated the audience by his eloquence in the English language and his marshalling of facts. Mr Warner spoke highly of the speech.

As a teacher Gokhale did not make much of a mark. He taught English to the boys of the 4th and 5th standards. A successful scholar is not necessarily a successful teacher. But Gokhale was an indomitable optimist. He spared no pains to prepare for his classes. He would not refer to the text while teaching. Every sentence and every word was reproduced without notes. But his exposition of poetry went above the heads of the boys. They could not understand why their teacher was so enraptured by what appeared to them to be difficult words. The boys merely wanted the simple meaning of their English lessons but the teacher wanted them to reach the heart of the writers.

While in the Fergusson College, he had to teach Southey's *Life of Nelson.* It was not easy to teach it to Indian boys who had little knowledge of the sea, of ships and docks, and of naval life. It was characteristic of his thoroughness that Gokhale went to Bombay and visited the docks to learn the nautical terms and phrases.

In the first year of his career in the tutorial line, Gokhale seems to have decided to achieve as much command as possible over the intricacies of the English language. He further developed his habit of committing to memory the writings of the best authors. Among the literary masterpieces memorized by him were Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the speeches of Burke, Gladstone, John Bright and several other British orators and parliamentarians. He would seek a lonely place and declaim them by himself, rarely committing a mistake. Editorials by English editors did not escape his attention.

We turn to the Fergusson College. It was setting up good traditions and attracting good students. It had on its staff

professors of the highest calibre. The desire to excel was strong in Gokhale and he took great pains to distinguish himself. In a galaxy of such luminous stars it took a great deal not to be outshone.

Gokhale's method of training himself helped him in other ways also. While he studied literature and liberalism mainly to improve his scholarship and powers of analysis, they were to stand him in good stead in his later career as legislator and statesman.

In the New English School, Gokhale taught not only English but mathematics and other subjects as occasion arose. While teaching arithmetic in the school in 1886-87 the idea occurred to him that he should compile a textbook on the subject. In those days, and even later, professors in the Fergusson College were asked to teach in the New English School as well. Gokhale came to be acquainted with N. J. Bapat, who was a very good teacher in the subject. Together, the two compiled a book which Gokhale showed to Tilak who was then Professor of Mathematics Tilak liked it and encouraged him to find a publisher. It was prescribed as a textbook in the New English School even before it was printed. The book was useful and popular and was prescribed by many schools in India. It ran through a number of editions and had a large sale. Its publication was a boon to Gokhale. It is said that he secured about Rs. 1,500 a year from the publishers as royalty. It was first published in English but was later translated into other languages as well.

Though Gokhale was now fairly well settled in life, all was not well in the Society of which he had become a life-member. Trouble was brewing ever since Gokhale joined the Society. It is necessary to understand the cross currents and under-currents that agitated this premier Society and had their repercussions on public life in Maharashtra, and indirectly on India. Vishnooshastri Chiplunkar, the founder of the School, died a

premature death, on March 17, 1882, at the age of 32. In July, 1882, Agarkar and Tilak were sentenced to four months' imprisonment in the defamation case that the Dewan of Kolhapur brought against them. On October 24, 1884, the Deccan Education Society was formed. On January 22, 1885, the Fergusson College was inaugurated. On October 14,1890, Tilak resigned his life-membership of the Society. These are important dates in the history of the Deccan Education Society. The details of the conflict need not detain us But we should have a broad picture of the happenings. For the lives of Tilak and Gokhale had roots in the Society : they both became leaders of all-India fame; they moulded the destinies of the country. But they had fundamental differences as well which were reflected in a painful manner early in their relationship.

Tilak and Agarkar were considered to be inseparables in their student days and in the Society of which they were founders. They were to the fore in the fight for the liberation of the country. Agarkar, however, laid as great emphasis on social reform as on political changes. Tilak, though he was not opposed to changes in social matters, held that political freedom should precede social reforms. These two, along with another friend, had started *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. Tilak was in charge of *Kesari*, and *Agarkar of Mahratta*. On many occasions divergent views came to be expressed in the two weeklies. The differences grew and the editors were affected by them.

Another reason for the split was that both of them were insistent on following the principles of sacrifice and suffering laid down by the Jesuits. But differences arose in the application of the principles. A proper balance had to be struck between the ideal and the practical. Tilak in his memorable letter of resignation in 1890 fully dealt with the subject. He said that in spite of several suggestions by him for compromise, no way out could be found. The point at issue related to salaries and incomes. Should a life-member earn outside the Society also

and thus fritter away his energies ? Will not such outside work come in the way of his efficient teaching ? These and similar questions had made work in the Society difficult.

Tilak said that he did not expect the members of the staff to be ascetics. They were given a salary of Rs 75 a month, a bonus of Rs 400 a year, as also a life insurance policy for Rs. 3,000. A life member was to get his salary till the end of his life. These arrangements sound reasonable; yet equal pay for all does not seem to have found favour with some of the members. Tilak's contention was that they were all engaged in the same mission. There should be no privations, neither should there be heart-burning over unequal pay.

Misunderstandings led to serious differences. Tilak said in his letter of resignation : "The only way to get out of these difficulties is to stop outside work altogether, or rule that the profits thereof shall go to the common fund as is the case in the missionary societies." In the same letter Tilak said of the new members that they appeared to believe that life-membership was a good start for a beginner in Poona and that if one had energy and ambition, one could use it "as a stepping-stone for personal distinction and gain." Tilak came to be called a stoic and his disinterestedness was looked upon as a cloak for self-assertion and self-glorification. The only course left for Tilak was to resign, which he did.

The proximate cause of the resignation can be seen from the following incident. Matters came to a head when Gokhale intended to accept the secretaryship of the Sarvajanik Sabha. On July 25, Tilak addressed a letter to the secretary of the managing body of the Deccan Education Society, proposing a meeting. He said, "I know that Mr Gokhale has been allowed to do private work to supplement his income to a certain extent. But I think a distinction should be made between occasional private work and accepting permanent service and

responsibility elsewhere. I think it is inconsistent with our object and contrary to the understanding which brought us together."

The meeting was called and a resolution was moved by Tilak disapproving the impending acceptance of the secretaryship of the Sarvajanik Sabha by Gokhale. Five voted for it and four against. Agarkar and Gokhale were in the minority. At the same meeting, another resolution approving Gokhale's acceptance was passed with 5 votes for and 4 against. Patankar, who was with Tilak at first, had changed sides. Thus a piquant situation arose : Gokhale was both free and not free to accept the post. Tilak reopened the question and another meeting was called on October 14. At that meeting Prof. Kelkar moved a resolution which was in effect against the acceptance of the secretaryship by Gokhale. Kelkar's resolution was passed with 6 votes for and 3 against. After this resolution was passed, Agarkar moved that it applied to all including himself. Votes were taken as to which members the resolution was applicable but the voting was puzzling. Tilak, Agarkar, Namjoshi and Apte were singled out as persons to whom the resolution was applicable. The original resolution thus affected Tilak. He immediately resigned, promising a detailed statement later. The Society was divided against itself. Gokhale had already taken up the post of the secretary and it was left to his good sense to continue or not to continue as a member of the Society.

After Tilak's resignation, another letter by Gokhale followed on the same day and at the same meeting. Gokhale said that if his withdrawal from the Society could induce Tilak to remain, "I offer my resignation as a life-member." Gokhale was told that Tilak's resignation was not connected with Gokhale's connection or severance from the Deccan Education Society. Gokhale thereupon withdrew his resignation. Prof. Patankar also tendered his resignation along with Tilak and

this was accepted. Thus ended the most painful chapter in the history of the Society which had set out to teach the lessons of sacrifice and suffering to the people at large.

The Deccan Education Society continued to flourish and promote education. Many educational institutions owe their inception to this organization whose members were inspired by a sense of sacrifice. And leaders of the Society tried to avoid clashes with the Government by adopting a policy of moderation, sobriety and conciliation.

Gokhale and Tilak were both great men meant for a wider arena than the Society. Years later, Gokhale started the Servants of India Society, the members of which were precluded from taking up activities outside that Society. Anything they earned over and above their prescribed incomes was credited to the Society. Gokhale carried out the Jesuit principle of sacrifice for the common good scrupulously in the institution which he founded, though he could not do so in the Deccan Education Society.

Tilak was not the founder of any more societies or institutions where such principles were to be observed strictly. But the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* attracted men of sacrifice who were great in their own way. Tilak was the proprietor of these concerns which were rarely out of monetary difficulties. He could not give the members of the staff the salaries they deserved. Nor was the principle of anything earned outside being credited to the principal body ever professed. Outside activities, on the other hand, enhanced the prestige of the weeklies and added to their strength.

To the members of the Deccan Education Society India was a country to be liberated from foreign domination by making the people self-reliant and discerning through education. Tilak, Agarkar and their colleagues were practical men. They knew that for the country's regeneration the spirit of

sacrifice was needed and not the letter of it. After all, what was important ? Was it the spirit of sacrifice for educating the people, or was sacrifice an end in itself ? Gokhale had not thought deeply about these things and he was in search of a guide. Agarkar appealed to him more than Tilak. Gokhale was only sorry that he was the cause of widening the rift and bringing matters to a head. He wanted to leave the Society but his going away would not have brought about harmony in the organization. In all this, he showed that he was simple, frank and unassuming.

4

Gokhale Builds up the Fergusson College

EVEN AFTER THE departure of Tilak and his two colleagues, the Society, the College and the School continued their activities. But there was no complete understanding among those who continued to be associated with these institutions. They began to take sides and feverishly blamed one another. Students, too, took part in all this. It was in such an unsettled atmosphere that Gokhale had to work. For his part, Tilak did not start another society of his own. On the other hand, he indicated that he would take classes in the Fergusson College if his outside activities permitted him. But this never happened. He left the Society never to return even as a casual lecturer.

It must be admitted that the Society could not regain its old appeal. It could secure, no doubt, scholars of brilliant academic careers like R. P. Paranjpye and R. D. Ranade, whose association with the Society was of great importance.

For all this, the Deccan Education Society did thrive and turn out thousands of youngmen to serve the country. It is no exaggeration to say that the leadership in all walks of life of Maharashtra came mostly from this Society. A number of schools and colleges were started all over the Bombay Province, on the lines of this institution. To that extent the aims of the founders may be said to have been achieved.

After the departure of Tilak, Gokhale began to take classes in mathematics. Later, he taught economics and history also. It is said that he did not feel at home in any of the subjects except in the last two. It is interesting to cite two extracts from the appreciations of two of his students regarding the quality of his teaching. R. P. Paranjpye says : "Gokhale ...was very methodical. He never slurred over even the easiest passages, took great pains to explain all the allusions, especially the historical references. But his teaching was not calculated to give one the love of literature as such, if it was not already there. Perhaps one may say that his teaching was more useful to an average examinee than Prof. Kelkar's."

Prof. T. K. Shahani, another student of his, says, "I can say that his lectures on Burke's *The French Revolution* in the year 1901 were nothing short of an intellectual treat, fit for an assembly of gods and not the pygmies that were round about him. Every thought of that political philosopher brought forth from his silver tongue a stream of illustrations, chosen from the everyday life of a citizen, so that the dullest boy received well a clear impression of the tenor of the book." These appreciations, differing in degrees, are bound to be correct. Paranjpye's opinion relates to the teaching of literature and Shahani's to that of history and literature. The former was a student at the commencement of Gokhale's career in the profession and the latter came at the end of it. Both of them, however, are agreed that 'an ordinary examinee' and 'the dullest boy' were benefited by his lectures. Gokhale, clearly, was no failure in the teaching profession. He was not a gifted teacher perhaps, but he took great pains to acquire the skill.

Gokhale was in the Society for fifteen years. For assessing his contribution, certain facts of that period have to be considered. Gokhale contributed some articles to the *Mahratta*. In the *Kesari* he was entrusted with the work of collecting and

presenting summaries of news. When Agarkar started a periodical, *Sudharak*, Gokhale was in charge of the English side of it. Some of the articles were well spoken of, but he was not born to be a journalist like some of his contemporaries.

In 1886-87 he wrote a series of articles in the *Mahratta* about 'General War in Europe' which elicited praise. He wrote an article 'Shame, Shame, my Lord, Shame' in defence of Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay at the time. It is said that that dignitary liked the article so much that he became a subscriber of the periodical. Beyond these occasional articles he did not plough deep in the journalistic field.

Politics and journalism were very close indeed in those days. Every political leader had a journal to back him, or owned a periodical for propagating his views. When Gokhale came in contact with M.G. Ranade he was in charge of the Quarterly Journal of the Sarvajanik Sabha.

Gokhale's personal life grew gradually to be but a part of his public life. But he never failed to fulfil his obligations of supporting, educating and encouraging the children of his brother. Gokhale's first marriage took place, as we have seen, when he was only 14. His wife was an unfortunate girl who suffered from leucoderma. He was prevailed upon by his brother and sister-in-law to marry again. Gokhale demurred at first but agreed in the end. It is said that his first wife's consent for the second marriage was obtained beforehand. The second marriage was happy, though the happiness was short-lived. The second wife died in 1900, when Gokhale was barely 34. He had a son who died early, and two daughters Kashibai and Godubai. Both of them naturally secured good education under the guidance of their father.

Gokhale was not to the fore in the social reform movement, though he was a staunch advocate of it. It is said that his

marrying for the second time, when his first wife was living, weighed on his mind so much that he considered himself unworthy of being in the forefront. What one cannot practise, one must not preach—this seems to have been his attitude. Though he had every sympathy for the cause, he scrupulously kept himself aloof. It was a self-denying ordinance. His guru, Ranade, a great social reformer, was in a similar predicament. After the death of his first wife, instead of marrying a widow, he married a girl of tender age. It was a subject of harsh criticism. Though Ranade was an advocate of widow marriages, he had to bow to the wishes of his family in the matter.

Gokhale was a keen sportsman. He was regularly out on the cricket field from 1887 to 1889, though he did not shine at the game. He played tennis and billiards off and on. He wished to excel the westerners at these games of their creation. Once, to his delight, he defeated an English opponent at billiards on a voyage from England to India. He loved cards and chess too, and to the end of his life found time for these indoor pastimes.

We do not know if Gokhale was fond of the drama. In those days plays were becoming a very powerful means of propaganda in political and social matters. What could not be openly said for fear of being called disloyal to the Government was indirectly suggested through plays. Social abuses were equally vigorously assailed through them.

Gokhale did not attract the masses by his speeches on the public platform. He was not an extremist and could not carry the masses with him, or hold them spell-bound. He never claimed to be a mass orator but his speeches were valuable and weighty, marshalling facts and figures.

Gokhale came to be the seniormost member of the Deccan Education Society about 1895. Members of the old guard had

either left or died. Gokhale was urged by his colleagues to accept the coveted Principalship of the Fergusson College. He declined and the reason was his genuine modesty. His activities outside were also growing every day. He had therefore no mind to add to them. He feared that he could not spare the time and the energy needed for discharging the responsibilities of a Principal. But Gokhale became more than a Principal. He was in fact the mentor in the world which had grown around him.

Gokhale was secretary of the Deccan Education Society for some years. It was an arduous task but he rose equal to the occasion. For collecting funds one had to knock at the doors of the rich and persuade them to part with money. In those days it was most difficult to collect funds. The reason is obvious. The moneyed class depended upon the Government for its very existence. The institution might fulfil a noble function and the cause might be good, but if the Government frowned on it, no money could be collected for it. The secretary had therefore to keep one eye on the Government and the other on those that depended on the Government. The princes, the industrialists, the rich landlords and others were afraid of displeasing the rulers. The Deccan Education Society had to allay the Government's suspicions regarding its activities and the students that it turned out.

It is interesting to note the changes that had come over the Society. Vishnooshastri Chiplunkar, who started the New English School, used to say that he would never allow an Englishman to pollute the sanctity of the sacred temple that he was building in the form of the school. Hardly a year or two had passed after Chiplunkar's death when all this changed. Even the name given to the College was that of an Englishman, the Governor of the Province. Once it was even proposed to have on the staff an Englishman. His refusal saved an awkward situation. Principal Selby, an Englishman, was elected President

of the Deccan Education Society. We do not think that members of the Society were glad or proud about all that they did. But they had to keep the Society going. No educational institution could exist if it did not secure governmental recognition; the price paid for it was expression of loyalty. The Deccan Education Society received a grant from the Government to meet its deficit in recurring expenditure.

Gokhale's task was difficult. But his character and disposition came to his rescue. He bore ill will to none. His persuasive tongue, engaging manners, and burning desire to conduct the institution served him well. They enabled him to collect money to erect the college building as also a hostel for the boys. It was no small achievement.

Before concluding this chapter dealing with Gokhale's educational activities, we may refer to his role in the wider sphere of Bombay University.

He was a member of the University Senate for a number of years and took great interest in its deliberations. He was of the view that the deliberations of the Senate should not be influenced by political considerations. The Government, though agreeing with this principle in theory, could not but subordinate education to politics. Gokhale on certain occasions had to remind the Government nominees on the Senate not to mix politics and education.

An instance in point arose when the Bombay Government did not want history to be taught as a compulsory subject in the wake of the Bengal Partition It said that since English history was not a compulsory subject in England for the degree course, in India, too, it need not be so. English history was not of much value to the majority of students; it lent itself especially to cramming as there were no professors properly qualified to teach it thoroughly. Thus it argued fallaciously.

Gokhale ably refuted these arguments. He said that history was not a compulsory subject in Calcutta University, yet the students there were refractory. The teaching of history had nothing to do with the political situation and any resultant upsurge. Mr Sharp, the Director of Public Education, had sent letters to professors in various colleges, asking them for their views regarding the teaching of history as a compulsory subject. This was a bad move and Gokhale did not like the exercise of governmental authority in the realm of education, and he vigorously pursued this issue.

5

Initiation into Politics

GOKHALE WAS BARELY nineteen when he became a teacher in the Deccan Education Society. When the question of his acceptance of the secretaryship of the Sarvajanik Sabha came up, calling forth, as we saw, the disapproval of Tilak and, in turn, touching off a crisis in the society, he was only twenty-two. The intervening years had brought him far more maturity than is suggested by their number. His own intellectual pursuits and intercourse with scholarly and strong-willed colleagues contributed, no doubt, to this process, but more than these it was the guidance of that great and good man, Justice Ranade, that made Gokhale what he became. This fact Gokhale never failed to acknowledge.

Justice Ranade was cast in the heroic mould, destined to be a maker of history. He was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress. Many institutions in Maharashtra owe their inception to him. Starting his career as a teacher of economics, he soon changed over to law and in course of time rose to be a High Court Judge. It was not the eminent position he held in the judiciary so much as his intellectual prowess, patriotism and scholarship that made people come under his spell. Years later, Gandhiji, speaking on the 'Quit India' resolution at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Bombay in 1942, said that Ranade was the ideal government servant. Ranade served the Government but was not servile and the Mahatma wanted

the government servants of the day to emulate his noble example. Ranade was fearless, and solicitous of the good of the country more than anything else. There were occasions when the Government doubted his loyalty and set detectives on him to watch his activities. Ranade was not a revolutionary. He was a firm believer in evolutionary progress. All in all, he was a saintly politician, a political saint.

In religious matters, Ranade was not orthodox in the traditional sense. He was a Prarthana Samajist and was a pillar of strength to that Samaj. However he did not wish to hurt the feelings of those who believed in old dogmas and rituals; he himself observed several time-honoured rites in his household.

In the social field, Ranade was a moderate revolutionary. He detested and discouraged a custom of the time, the marriage of girls of tender age. He was a supporter of widow-remarriage and himself took an active part in celebrating such marriages, for which "transgression" he was excommunicated. The family was persecuted and put to great suffering. He was, with Agarkar, the resolute opponent in Maharashtra of many shocking customs such as the tonsuring of a woman's head after her husband's death, the wanton neglect of girl infants, and even the last remnants of the evil practice of *sati*.

In politics, Ranade was an uncompromising constitutionalist. But his outlook was not passive. He never flinched from bringing to light whatever he thought was wrong and inadvisable in Government's decisions and actions. In support of the causes he championed, he was indefatigable in collecting facts and figures, in subjecting the data to the stern test of logic, in framing memorials and in educating and mobilizing public opinion.

Ranade was as interested in economics as in political reform. He was a staunch advocate of rapid industrializa-

tion. Why should not the principles of economics applicable to England be applied to India ? Why should India depend on foreign goods when she could manufacture them at home ? Industrialization was to him the sheet anchor of India's progress. Ranade's economic writings can be read even today with interest. Such was the man whom Gokhale chose as his guru.

Their first encounter was an ironical beginning to a relationship to be intense and intimate. In 1885, only a year after Gokhale had become a teacher, some function of the school was being celebrated in Hirabag, and Gokhale was in charge of receiving the guests and directing them to their chairs. Not knowing Ranade then, Gokhale asked him to show his invitation card. The distinguished guest had forgotten to bring it with him, and Gokhale, a stickler even then, would not allow him to go in. Abasaheb Sathe, the secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha at the time, intervened and took Ranade to the seat reserved for him. The incident was soon forgotten and Gokhale did not have to apologize to Ranade for what had happened.

The young school teacher, who soon became lecturer in the Fergusson College, could not but attract attention in the town, especially when Agarkar spoke so very highly of him to one and all. It was Agarkar who recommended to Ranade that he should call in the promising young man for conversation and judge for himself. Abasaheb Sathe took Gokhale to Ranade and the latter was highly impressed by Gokhale's behaviour, humility and ardour. As a writer has put it, kindred spirits met and achieved a holy communion.

Gokhale's visits to Ranade became frequent. He went to him as one would go to a guru to learn the rudiments of politics and public service. From 1887 to 1892 Gokhale took lessons from Ranade, who was a hard taskmaster indeed.

Ranade's ideas on what changes were needed in the political status of the country were already well developed. His method of work included the study of every important piece of paper published by the Government. Nothing of importance escaped him. He would then write out in his own scholarly and powerful manner his reactions to Government policies and communicate them to Government. Those were days when politics had not yet been declared out of bounds to civil servants. But that is not to say that Government officials welcomed or liked Ranade's fearless and searching inquiries and comments. Ranade knew his task was thankless. But his defence was twofold : that the Indian public had to be educated in the art of government, and that the Government should be fought with its own weapons Often he said that since it was an age of public debate, his labours were not wasted. The world outside, the Liberal element in England and, most of all, the people of this country would at least know better because of what he had brought to light.

Whether the Government of the day benefited from Ranade's exertions or not, Gokhale did. They laid the basis of his entire public life. How knowledge was to be combined with faith and fortitude in order to serve the people, how accuracy of figures was essential in dealing with intricate problems, how vigour of thought was more important than vigour of language, all this and more Gokhale learnt from the master.

Gokhale does not seem to have concerned himself greatly with the religious and social views of his master. He did not follow him in all that Ranade thought and preached. Not that he was opposed to them like certain others but he was more interested in what was in those days called 'political economy'. On one or two occasions, however, Gokhale was involved in the social controversies then raging. Once some

leading citizens of Poona were invited to a meeting in a Christian organization where a certain English missionary was to speak. Tea was served at the end of the meeting. In those days taking tea at the hands of the missionaries was considered a transgression that Hindus had to atone for. It was to invite ostracism from the caste. The whole thing was the premeditated practical joke of one Gopalrao Joshi, a friend of most of the invitees and who had embraced Christianity to renounce it later. When tea was served, Ranade, Gokhale and Tilak looked at one another, not knowing what to do. The other non-Christian guests were in a similar predicament. Some amongst them sipped a spoonful, others quietly threw away the contents and still others pretended to take the cup to the lip. When the meeting dispersed, everyone was apprehensive as to what would follow. Gopalrao Joshi promptly published the names of all the invitees in a newspaper besides giving an account of the proceedings. The publication was in the nature of a bombshell. The *sanatani* element was up in arms. The event was discussed in every street and in every home. Shankaracharya, the highest religious authority, was asked to decide the method of 'atonement'. Each of the persons present at the missionary function was ordered to expiate for the error on pain of excommunication. At this distance of time the incident must appear very ironical, especially because the form of expiation ordered was the giving of four annas to a Brahmin priest ! But at the time the claims of caste were rigid. All of them under some pretext accepted the ruling, but Gokhale along with fifteen others did not.

The reputation that Gokhale earned in later years for thoroughness was due to his tutelage under Ranade. Even in a small letter he would not allow a single detail to be slurred over or a single mistake to creep in. He would take immense pains and he would not rest. For fear of losing his master's good opinion, he would spend sleepless nights, and

pursue a subject with the feverish zeal of a yogi. Ranade himself would not allow Gokhale to rest until he had finished the work allotted to him. Ranade was also very sparing of compliments. A 'that will do' from him was taken as high compliment by Gokhale.

Restraint of language was even more marked in Ranade's dealings with opponents. Not for him the resort to invective or gibes so common in debates between political adversaries. One's opponent, he held, should be disarmed through the use of facts and statistics. Never to humble or belittle, but to win over through an appeal to reason—that was Ranade's approach. Gokhale, young and exposed to the more familiar methods of controversy, took time to appreciate and cultivate such moderation, but ultimately he, too was to become known for the manner in which he balanced pros and cons, gave due respect to the opponent for his point of view, was precise in thought and sober in writing.

Ranade's influence enabled Gokhale to make his choice for life. He would devote himself to politics and public service—and as a public worker he would make no compromise on principles, or be untrue to himself for a little applause. Adherence to truth, willingness to admit one's mistakes, honesty of purpose and respect for moral standards—these, Gokhale came to believe so early in his life, were the hallmarks of a true servant of the people.

Ranade was a religious man. He rose early and devoted the first few hours of the morning to prayers. Gokhale narrates a moving incident which occurred when he was returning from the Amraoti Congress of 1897 with Ranade. They were the only occupants in the train compartment. "At about 4 A.M.," says Gokhale, "I was suddenly roused by some singing in the carriage and on opening my eyes I saw Ranade sitting up and singing two *abhangas* of Tukaram again

and again and striking the palms together by way of accompaniment. The voice was by no means musical but the fervour with which he was singing was so great that I felt thrilled through and through and I could not help sitting up and listening... It was a rich moment in my life. The scene will never fade from my memory."

Gokhale himself, however is not known to have offered prayers in public. But he was a deeply religious man. Srinivasa Sastri has recorded : "He was living as it were in the presence of the Most High and desiring nothing as much as to make his life an instrument of God's will and an instrument of public welfare under His guidance. This is what I found in his intimate papers. It is dated February 18, 1898 : 'By grace of Shri Guru Dattatreya, I will endeavour humbly but firmly to acquire or achieve the following :—(1) I will practise yoga regularly. (2) I will acquire a good knowledge of (a) History, ancient and modern, (b) Philosophy, ancient and modern, (c) Astronomy, (d) Geology, (e) Physiology, (f) Psychology, and (g) French. (3) I will try to become a member of (a) the Bombay Legislative Council, (b) the Supreme Legislative Council and (c) the British Parliament. In all these ambitions I will try to do good to my country by all means in my power. (4) I will try to become a preacher of the highest philosophical religion and I will preach this religion to the whole *world.*" Sastri calls it a 'grandiloquent document', and indeed it was so. Had destiny but vouchsafed him a longer life, this self-appointed servant of India would have become a servant of the world and verily taught and preached the highest philosophical religion.

This document was not the casual scribbling of a visionary. It was the overflowing of an ardent soul. But one wonders why he wanted to learn sciences like geology, astronomy and the like. His ambition to learn French was understandable. It was the lingua franca of the West in those days and for a

person to step into the international arena knowledge of French was necessary. Gokhale succeeded to a great extent in fulfilling his ambitions, so ardently desired and so assiduously pursued. Gurudeo Dattatreya, the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer, three in one, seems to have been the Form of God that he worshipped.

Goodness and greatness, burning desire for service, truthfulness and distaste for earthly gains are all virtues which are not of this earth. To Gandhiji Gokhale appeared good not because he was great but because he was spiritual. Ranade, Gokhale, Gandhiji and Tilak were persons of a spiritual mould.

Ranade died in 1901. The death of the preceptor on whose life he based his own code of conduct was a great blow to Gokhale. He wanted to write the master's biography and one of his great regrets in his own last days was that he had not done so.

Here are two estimates, one by Gokhale and the other by Tilak, as to how they felt about Ranade. Gokhale said : "Since Raosaheb's (that is, Ranade's) death I have been feeling like one in whose life sudden darkness has fallen, and though new honours are coming to me as the world understands them they bring me very little comfort and no real pleasure. And when friends press their congratulations on me I feel like one who is asked to sit down to a sumptuous meal, when he has just returned from the funeral of a dear departed. Of course, our sorrow, however overwhelming it may be, must not be allowed to interfere with our allotted work with which we must go on, feebly, it may be, owing to the loss of old supports, but steadily and ever in faith and hope." The sentiments expressed in this remind us of the speech made by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru just after the assassination of Gandhiji. Gokhale felt orphaned but the call of duty was supreme and he rose to the occasion.

Tilak in his obituary article on Ranade in *Kesari* said: "If there is a new spirit of courage and resistance in Maharashtra and if there is a fearless and forthright discussion of public questions in the press and on the platform, it is a fruit of the ceaseless industry over 25 years carried on by Ranade." Further on he wrote, "But Ranade did all this with great success because of his patience, tactfulness and earnestness to achieve his noble objectives."

6

Public Activities

GOKHALE BEGAN HIS political career as the secretary of Sarvajanik Sabha. There was strong opposition to his accepting that post from some of the members of the Deccan Education Society, as, according to them, it would interfere with his work in the College. The post was elective and the salary was Rs 40 a month which Gokhale did not take. Thus the hurdle was cleared.

Gokhale started the work under the supervision of Ranade. Tilak had opposed this 'outside activity' on principle and had been overruled. All this sowed more seeds of dissension among the two leaders. Neither Ranade nor Gokhale was responsible for bringing matters to a head in the Society; the trouble was already there. Ranade was not actively connected with the Society, though he happened to be on the Council of that Society once in 1884. He was present when the College was started and gave a small donation of Rs 50. He was, however, consulted whenever critical situations arose.

The Sarvajanik Sabha fulfilled an important role. Before the advent of the Indian National Congress, there was no all-India institution in the country to ventilate the grievances of the people. But in the three metropolitan cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras there were organizations which performed that function. In Bombay, Dadabhai Naoroji established the Bombay Association in 1853. Fourteen years later a similar

institution was started at Poona. At first called Poona Association, it changed its name three years later and came to be called the Sarvajanik Sabha. The object of the Sabha was to bring the needs and feelings of the people to the attention of the Government. Though rebuffed by the Government, it was an intermediary between the rulers and the ruled. Its sponsor, G. V. Joshi, was such an indefatigable worker for public causes that he was popularly referred to as 'Sarvajanik Kaka'. Although most of the office-bearers of the Sabha were chiefs of Princely states and Government servants, its real work was carried on by persons like Sarvajanik Kaka and Justice Ranade. Curiously enough, Ranade's name does not appear anywhere in the list of members of the Sabha, though his was the brain behind all its activities. The work of the Sabha was quiet, never flashy. It fought its battles through memoranda. The day of agitation and direct action was far off. The time precluded anything drastic.

The circumstances under which Gokhale became the secretary of the Sabha have already been narrated. He also edited its quarterly journal. Twenty-six issues were published under his editorship. Out of 49 articles appearing in the 26 issues, Gokhale contributed only eight or nine. There were several difficulties in Gokhale's way as editor. The journal was published in English and the number of people who could afford to buy English journals or take interest in the kind of fare it provided was perforce limited. No wonder that the subscription list came down from 500 to 200.

The breath of Tilak's life was activism. He and his co-workers thought that certain trends in the province, nay in the country, had to be reversed before it was too late. After the stabilization of British rule, a new class of leaders was coming forward, especially in the politics of Bombay and the Deccan. The rich gentry, the newly-educated and civil servants were gaining ground in public estimation and virtually became an

alliance of interests. For its part, the Government encouraged this class as a matter of deliberate policy. In turn the newly educated sang the praise of everything English—English culture and even the benefits of British rule in India. Tilak strongly believed that the true deliverance of India and the uplift of the Indian people could not come through a class which hugged the chains that bound the nation. He had no faith in those who took pride in a derivative culture. He felt that the time was ripe for a leadership to arise from the cultural roots of the country and serve the people in a true spirit of sacrifice that expected no rewards. It is not for nothing that Tilak was a great commentator on the *Bhagavadgita*. Action, and action unmindful of recompense, was what he wanted. He had no patience with those who thought that gains would flow to the people through the rulers' bounty or good sense. He took every opportunity to give a fight to what he thought was the new 'loyal' class.

The membership of the Sarvajanik Sabha was not open to all. Tilak enrolled additional members under its Constitution, and at the annual general meeting which was held on July 14, 1895, the old guard was out-voted. The chairman, the treasurer and several others who had served long in the Sabha were replaced by new-comers. Tilak did not, however, either ask for or desire the exit of Gokhale. But how could Gokhale and the minority function against odds. Gokhale tendered his resignation of the secretaryship after a few months. Ranade and his associates were not prepared to take this defeat lying down or to be deflected from their chosen path. On October 31, 1896, they started another institution, the Deccan Sabha. Gokhale became its secretary.

Tilak could not have expected this turn of events. He was upset by the declared aims and objectives of the Deccan Sabha, that 'Liberalism and moderation will be the watchwords of this association.' There was nothing new in the objectives, only

the terms were new and explicit. The spirit of 'liberalism' implies freedom from racial and credal prejudices and a steady devotion to all measures that seek to do justice between man and man, giving the rulers the loyalty that is due to the law they are bound to administer and securing at the same time to the people equity which is their right under the law. Moderation implies never vainly aspiring after unpractical ideals but striving each day to do the work that lies nearest to our hand in a spirit of fair play and with a readiness for compromise on details.

In an article in *Kesari* on November 10, 1896, Tilak was strongly critical of these objectives. His attack on Ranade was severe, even his biographer, N. C. Kelkar, later conceded. But why was Tilak so trenchant? Because he thought that by appropriating liberalism and moderation to his own group, Ranade was giving a handle to the Government to deal severely and ruthlessly with the other group. Ranade might not have meant it; but the Government was bound to take advantage of the obvious split.

After the inauguration of the Deccan Sabha, one thing emerged clearly: Ranade, Tilak and Gokhale were not going to work together, or think together. Ranade was never in the forefront of political activity; but Gokhale his disciple, was destined to lead the moderate party. The actual split in the Indian National Congress did not occur till 1907 at Surat; but it had its origin both in the Deccan Education Society controversy and in the struggle for capturing power in the Sarvajanik Sabha. Two groups had already emerged. Their differences awaited an opportunity to manifest themselves on a national scale.

It is customary to refer to Tilak as an extremist. The connotation of the term can be understood only if it is re-

membered that it is, and was meant to be, the antonym of Ranade's 'liberalism'. Ranade and his colleagues firmly believed that without social reform there could be no progress; that is, liberalism was strongly entrenched in social reform. It also was associated with the theory of the divine dispensation of British rule in India. Tilak believed in neither of these formulations. His political views, widely known, were linked to the agitational approach.

Tilak himself would not have differed from the objectives of the Deccan Sabha in general. He was as stout a champion as anybody else of freedom from racial and credal prejudices and of equality before law. He may have differed regarding the question of loyalty but he never non-co-operated with law or claimed that he was an advocate of sedition-as Gandhiji did later in asking the Government to give him the maximum sentence for nurturing that spirit. If moderation means aspiring after limited aims Tilak was not a moderate. He wanted *Swaraj* which he claimed, in words that have become famous, to be his birthright.

As a matter of fact, no leader in our history was wholly a moderate or wholly an extremist. The extremists were moderates in some respects and on some occasions; and the moderates were extremists at certain times and moderates at other times.

What became of the Sarvajanik Sabha after its capture by Tilak, and of the Deccan Sabha after its establishment by Ranade, remains to be told. The Government ceased to recognize the Sarvajanik Sabha, and despite its management by the Tilak group it languished. The Deccan Sabha took over the Sarvajanik Sabha's old work of sending memorials, representations and delegations. Gokhale had an opportunity to put his heart into the work. He was even sent to England on behalf of the Sabha to present the Indian case before the

Welby Commission. The Sarvajanik Sabha was not fortunate enough to get that honour, though Gokhale referred to his relations with the Sabha in his evidence before the Commission. It may be added that both Sabhas exist to this day.

7

First Notable Success

LORD WELBY HAS been immortalized by Gokhale. Without Gokhale's association both Lord Welby and the Commission would have been relegated to the obscurity of the archives. By providing an opportunity to Gokhale to lead evidence before it and prove himself an economist, a politician and a patriot, the Commission has earned a place for itself in Indian history.

The Welby Commission was appointed 'to inquire into the administration and management of the military and civil expenditure incurred under the authority of the Secretary of State for India-in-Council or the Government of India and the apportionment of charges between the two Governments for purposes in which both are interested.' In a nutshell, the Commission was entrusted with the task of apportioning the charges between the Governments of India and Britain. It seemed that the Indian public was nowhere in the picture. It was a Commission appointed by Parliament for its own guidance and for its own justification. It is unnecessary to state that the official group, consisting of eleven out of its fourteen members, was in the majority in the Commission. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir William Wedderburn and W. S. Caine constituted the minority.

Some Indians were invited to England to give evidence

before the Commission. They were Surendranath Banerjea, D. E. Wacha, G. Subramania Iyer and G. K. Gokhale. The Commission apparently had not wanted any Indian to appear before them, but such a development was unthinkable with a member like Dadabhai Naoroji serving on it. Gokhale was the youngest of the Indian team, being hardly 31 years of age at the time. If Ranade, or the great statistician and economist Rao Bahadur G. V. Joshi, had been deputed in place of Gokhale, there would have been nothing wrong. They could not go and Gokhale was chosen to represent the Deccan Sabha. Gokhale did wonderfully well. He became at a bound an all-India figure in the political and economic fields.

To assess Gokhale's contribution, let us glance at the constitutional set-up of the time. A constitution did exist, but only for giving a free hand to the rulers to exploit the ruled and drain the resources of the country.

Gokhale stated in his evidence before the Commission: "The controlling authorities at present are: the Government of India controlling the Provincial Governments, the Secretary of State-in-Council controlling the Government of India (the Council sometimes tries to control the Secretary of State but it is now much more dependent on him than it was once) and Parliament in theory controlling all." Who controlled the British Parliament? The British people, the voters eligible to vote for their representative. Thus India was controlled not by tax-payers in this country, but by taxpayers in England. What good could be expected from them? Would they not desire to get as much from the conquered country as they possibly could? The Queen's Proclamation and various enactments were there but only on the Statute books. India in effect was ruled by one authority and that authority was the Secretary of State for India. "The Budgets are offered for criticism only and have not got to be passed", stated Gokhale. No resolutions were allowed to be moved for amending or

altering or substituting items which were already final in the financial statements.

Explaining the arbitrary and dictatorial nature of such a disposition, Gokhale said : "Section 55 of the Government of India Act of 1858 is supposed to give protection to Indian revenues against their application to extra-Indian purposes. But it is now well known how that section has failed to attain its object in practice." Under the East India Company, he said, Indian revenues had been certainly much better protected. The change-over from the Company's rule to the direct rule of the British Government was for the worse in that respect. The Company was acting as a buffer between Indian interests and British interests. They guarded Indian interests up to a degree but direct rule had thrown to the winds even that little protection of Indian interests.

At the time the Welby Commission was appointed there was great dissatisfaction in India that her revenues were diverted for conquering territories beyond India's borders, that the Exchange Compensation Allowances given to servants recruited in Europe were unjustified, that the civil services were manned by Englishmen, that the European traders were given such concessions as to lead to exploitation, that public works engineers had launched an agitation for increase of salaries, and that the new railway lines undertaken for construction were for giving facilities to the foreigne s for exploiting untapped resources in India.

These were the main complaints. There were other grievances as well. But the unspoken grievance was that we were a conquered people. The rulers' grip was firm and an attempt was being made to loosen that grip a little, if possible. This was the extent of the constitutional agitation of those days !

Gokhale took great pains to bring to light all these facts.

To him the voting on Budgets was a way of guarding Indian interests. But to our rulers that was cutting at the very root of their rule. The British Government had carried on wars in Afghanistan and Burma for extending their territories. They had also extended their dominion in the East. All the expenditure of these wars and expansion, which came to about 1,150 millon rupees, was met from the Indian exchequer and not from the British. India should not have been burdened with that debt. Gokhale stated that a large European army was maintained on a war footing at a time of peace and that India was paying high salaries to these Europeans. What was the justification ? Expenditure on the maintenance of the Army went on increasing on account of additional recruitment of British soldiers and their staff officers. This was the state of affairs so far as the military side of the Indian administration was concerned.

'Exchange Compensation Allowance' was granted to all European employees about the middle of 1893. The allowance consisted in the conversion of half the salary of each officer into sterling at the rate of 1s 6d a rupee subject to a maximum of £ 1,000 and then converting it back into rupees at the current rate of exchange. It resulted in a general increase in the salary, and Gokhale showed that the amount of this additional burden came to Rs 1·2 to 1·3 millon a year in 1894-95 and 1895-96. The salaries of the overseas officers were fixed in sterling. No doubt the exchange value had considerably lowered the gold value of the salaries in terms of rupees; but the salaries, said Gokhale, were already so high that there was no necessity for giving any allowance to compensate the loss thus resulting from the fall. But the controlling authority was not the actual taxpayers who were in India; and those in control had the interests of their countrymen before them. The fall in exchange value ought not to have been availed of as an excuse to enhance the salaries of the foreigners in an indirect way. In support of his

argument Gokhale cited a statement submitted to the Finance Committee in 1886 by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce which represented the English mercantile community. That Chamber had specifically stated that the salaries of officers getting more than 1,000 rupees a month should be revised and reduced. In spite of all this, Gokhale's was a cry in the wilderness. India had to meet the additional amount paid to these favoured servants out of its own resources.

One of the notable things mentioned by Gokhale in his written evidence related to the remarks of the Finance Committee appointed in 1886, of which Ranade was a member. The European engineers in the Public Works Department carried on an agitation for its reorganization in 1885. This ought to have been banned, but Government did not do so. Their demand was for an increment in the pay of the Executive Engineers of the third and fourth grades and for the assistant engineers of the first and second grades.

The favour shown to European traders and commercial interests was another of the points established before the Commission. Apart from the disadvantage at which the Indian manufacturer was placed, the loss of revenue from exempting from duty the goods from abroad was considerable. But that was only part of the story. The railways had given an enhanced opportunity for English traders to exploit the various regions of India. Though the railways were at first laid to facilitate the movement of the armed forces across the length and breadth of the country, subsequent laying of railways seemed to be determined solely by the profit they would bestow on foreign merchants. Part of the policy consisted of encouragement to private railways; they were on occasions financed. Some of the shareholders of companies were civil servants working in this country. What wonder that those who sponsored the companies secured concessions and facilities ?

The long-standing grievance against the I.C.S. cadre, its recruitment, etc., needs no emphasis here. Not only this cadre, every office of any importance was offered to Englishmen. Gokhale gave the numerical strength of those who manned the Bombay Province at the time. Out of 157 I.C.S. posts, only five were held by Indians. In the Land Records Department there were six posts, all held by Europeans. In the Forest Department all the 29 officers were Europeans. Out of 12 posts in the Salt Department only one was held by an Indian. Even in the Jail Department all the 11 posts were held by Europeans. In the Medical, Sanitary, Political, Public Works Departments and the Police, all posts were held by the Europeans. Only in the Education Department was Indian employment comparatively higher—10 out of 45.

What had all this to do with the inquiry of the Commission? Gokhale insisted, when told by the members that irrelevant things need not be brought up before the Commission, that the problem was an indivisible whole. But what was irrelevant to them was relevant to the needs of India and its problems. Gokhale would not give way but emphasized his points of view. There were passages at arms between him and some members of the Commission. But he had a sympathetic hearing. The result, however, was not to his expectations.

Gokhale was put on his mettle and subjected to tough examination. He acquitted himself as a seasoned and responsible politician. The attempt to make him admit that his contentions were wrong failed. For instance, Gokhale had submitted in his written evidence that the construction of more railways was going on for exploitation. He elaborated the point in his oral deposition. He admitted that the railways had improved communications and had been of immense use in carrying food and fodder to famine-stricken areas. But the expansion in reality had not been actuated by those humane considerations but by commercial interests—more for export of food-grains and raw

material on a large scale to countries outside India than for internal movement. In return for the precious material that went out came cheap, unnecessary foreign products, in the distribution of which Government agencies like the railways colluded. Gokhale stressed that these imported goods were killing indigenous industries and throwing artisans and small craftsmen back on to the land.

Gandhiji himself would not have put the case differently. If the railways were indirectly killing indigenous industries, he would have certainly gone to the length of crying halt to their expansion. Indigo, tea, coffee and other plantations were all monopolized by British Companies. For exporting the produce they wanted the expansion of railways. In order to allow the foreign traders as much latitude as possible, the policy of free trade was forced upon India. The exporters were Englishmen and the importers also were Englishmen. They were exempted from customs duties, thus depriving India of the income accruing from that source. Gokhale said : "This free trade policy that has been thrust upon us has killed all our industries. No colony has accepted this policy. The result is that our people are growing poorer and poorer because they are all thrust back on agriculture. The old industries we had are swept away under the competition of steam and machinery. All this has retarded our progress".

In those days the railways were losing money, and naturally so. With the series of concessions and facilities given to foreign traders, how could they show profits ? Not that the railways did not bring benefit, but it was not India that benefited. If Indian leaders were exasperated and went to the length of saying that further expansion of the railways should be stopped, the reason was not their obscurantism but this discrimination against Indian interests. The Chairman of the Welby Commission put a direct question to Gokhale : "Would you really impress it on the Commission

that the Secretary of State and the Government of India have undertaken these railways principally in the interests of English commerce and the commercial classes; is that a direct charge of yours ?" Gokhale replied, "That is the impression in India, because the facts are there." In support of his statement Gokhale said, "Whenever a Viceroy of India goes out to India, there is a deputation that waits on him and they put pressure on him to construct these railways and he makes a promise, more or less, that he would do his best ! These promises ultimately end in their fulfilment." Gokhale quoted the Finance Commission as recommending a milage of 20,000 as sufficient for the prevention of famines. He pointed out that the Indian National Congress never demanded or pressed for more railways. Gokhale's points regarding the Indian Railways carried conviction.

Another telling point made by Gokhale which upset the complacency of the Commission related to the Famine Insurance Fund. That Fund was created by imposing an additional tax during Lord Lytton's regime. It was expected that the additional tax would give a return of 1.5 crore rupees a year and that it would be utilized for famine relief and for famine insurance. But though the tax yielded the expected income, it was not used for the purpose for which it was meant. Gokhale brought to light the fact that the Fund (or a part of it) was being used for paying the interest on the capital used for the Bengal Nagpur Railway and the Indian Midland Railway. That was clearly a case of misappropriation of funds and a breach of faith.

From the report of the proceedings it seems that this allegation was never questioned or controverted. The figures plainly supported what Gokhale said. The only issue on which heat was generated was whether the promise given by the high officer was to be held above the wording of the Act. Sir James Piele relied more on the law and not on

the speeches. Gokhale replied that he relied on the speeches of Sir John Strachey and not on the legislation. This is how the questions and answers went.

GOKHALE : I did not think that anyone would dispute what the Secretary of State himself had said about his own object.

SIR JAMES PIELE : Not when he legislates and puts his thought into an Act. Is not what he says in an Act more important than what he says as an *obiter dictum* ?

GOKHALE : Here he distinctly says the legislation was on this understanding; the understanding of the Government of India would not appear in the Act.

Neither Sir James Piele nor the Chairman of the Commission could hold that the Secretary of State had not given a pledge to that effect : they tried to exculpate the Government by taking shelter under the wording of the Act. We do not know whether the aims and objects were appended to a Bill in those days as is done now. But the legislatures in those days were not as developed as they are now. In the absence of that part of the Bill, only the speeches of the mover of the Bill were considered, or were bound to be considered, as forming part of the Bill. Gokhale told Sir James Piele that he had not examined the Act. Had he seen the Act or Bill his argument would have been more powerful. The letter of the law favoured Sir James Piele's contention, but its spirit favoured Gokhale's stand. It was really reprehensible that the Government spent the income from additional taxation meant for famine relief for paying interest on the losing railway concerns. It was unthinkable that such a thing could ever occur in England.

Gokhale made several suggestions to the Commission for

improving the Indian budgets. He wanted the budgets to be passed item by item in the Supreme Legislative Council. Lest his remedy should be considered revolutionary, he suggested, in his usual modest way, that the official majority might be retained so that the passing of the budget was ensured, but a vote taken only of the non official members. If the majority of non-official members disapproved a certain item they would draw up a statement and submit it to a Committee of Control to be set up for the purpose. This was like creating a council within a Council. "The plan", Gokhale said, "provides only for a reasonable amount of control and enables the representatives of Indian tax payers, who have no power of controlling expenditure, to make a complaint in a responsible and constitutional manner."

But the time had not yet come for such a demand and, secondly, the Commission was not the place to make such a suggestion. The Commission was appointed, we recall, for the apportionment of charges between the British Government and the Government of India for military operations. Gokhale's suggestion was in effect that India should not be burdened with any expenditure for military operations undertaken outside India. He wanted Section 55 of the Act of 1858 to be amended. That Section empowered the British Parliament to defray the expenses from Indian revenues for military operations outside. The only proviso laid down was the securing of the consent of both Houses of Parliament, which was a simple matter. Gokhale's proposal was "that except in case of actual or threatened invasion, the revenues of India shall not be used for military operations beyond the natural frontiers of India unless, at any rate, a part of such expenditure is put on the English estimates."

Gokhale's suggestion for amending the Section was modest. But the British point of view was that territorial ex-

pansion was not meant for the security and safety of the British dominions but for the security and safety of India; therefore, India must pay in her own interest. This was the imperialistic logic. For defensive purposes only, maintained Gokhale on the other hand, India could be made to pay. But 'invasion' and 'defence' are very subtle terms.

Gokhale made another suggestion, a novel one, that the Legislative Councils of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the N. W. Provinces, Punjab and Burma should each send one representative from among its elected members to the British Parliament. Explaining the suggestion he said, "Six members in a House of 670 would introduce no disturbing factor but the House will be able to ascertain Indian public opinion on certain questions coming before Parliament for consideration." "The French and Portuguese Settlements in India," he went on, "already enjoy such a privilege." In Gokhale's vision the conquered and the conquerors, the white and the brown were to be brought together. That dream was never to be fulfilled. It is a moot question wheher Indian representation in the British Parliament would have brought Indian self-government nearer. But there can be little doubt that this would have led to the arousing of public opinion in England through the forum of the British Parliament.

If the idea of Indian representation in the British Parliament sounds impracticable, not so the reasoned case he made out for the appointment only of persons well versed in financial matters as Viceroys of India. Pointing out that the outstanding Prime Ministers of Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Walpole, Pitt, Peel, Disraeli and Gladstone, were their own finance ministers as well, Gokhale implied that military repute and mere aristocratic birth were little recommendations in themselves as the position demanded real financial acumen. This argument might have hurt the feelings of many Viceroys,

but Gokhale was there not to please them but to plead the cause of his country.

Gokhale's evidence took two days, the 12th and 13th April, 1897. The outcome of the Welby Commission's labours was itself not of much importance. In the words of *The History of Indian National Congress,* "The Welby Commission had reported and the small relief given to India was more than compensated by a fresh burden of £ 7,86,000 per annum imposed on the country by an increase in the pay of the British soldier." The recommendations of the Welby Commission were apparently accepted, but what was being done irregularly was regularized in another way and in another form.

But Gokhale could derive the satisfaction that he had fulfilled a mission. His own estimate of what he did is contained in a letter that he wrote from England to G. V. Joshi on April 16, 1897. In it he said: "My evidence was taken on Monday and Tuesday and everything passed off first class—far better than I had ever ventured to hope. On Tuesday, after the whole thing was over, Sir William Wedderburn came up to me and said, 'You have done most splendidly. Your evidence will be much the best on our side. Let me congratulate you on the signal service which you have rendered your country. Our minority report will be based practically on your evidence.' Sir W. Wedderburn added that I had made a great impression on Lord Welby and other members of the Commission. Good old Dadabhai is also quite pleased. Mr. Caine, who attended only for a few hours on the first day, writes to me as follows: 'I have spent about seven hours in careful study of your evidence. Permit me to say that I have never seen a cleverer or more masterly exposition of the views of an educated Indian reformer on all the subjects dealt with. And though I do not agree necessarily with all your views, it must of necessity have very great weight with the Commission. You and Wacha have rendered splendid and unique service to your country, for which your countrymen ought to be ever

grateful.' Mr. Courtney was much struck by my evidence and all through he was extremely sympathetic, always ready to help me with questions as against Piele or Scoble. On the whole everything has passed off in a most gratifying manner. And now let me say that I have thought it my duty to tell you all this because all this high praise belongs to you and to Raosaheb (Mr. Justice Ranade) and not to me. And if it has been bestowed on me, I have received it only as your representative, and now I lay it at your feet and Raosaheb's as our ancient honoured *gurudakshina*. For the most part, my work has been that of a conduit pipe or Edison's phonograph and I have told Sir William Wedderburn and Dadabhai so. Pray accept once more this expression of deepest gratitude for the splendid assistance which you so cordially, so cheerfully gave me, and which has enabled me to discharge satisfactorily a great national duty." A letter was also written by D. E. Wacha to G. V. Joshi the same day, in which he said this of Gokhale's performance : "He manfully stood the cross-examination, so much so, the papers have thought fit to give a part of it—touching railways and poverty—in the shape of question and answer with the sensational heading 'Startling the Royal Commission'."

8

In the Indian National Congress

THERE WAS A great stir in Poona in 1893. There were arches across the streets, festoons and other decorations. Poona was according a grand reception to Dadabhai Naoroji, the great leader. Gokhale's enthusiasm knew no bounds. He was only twenty-seven but had come to be recognized as a leader of the Congress. He wanted to be a sort of aide-de camp to the revered leader who was the President-elect of the Lahore Congress. The young man could not find a place by the side of Dadabhai in a horse-driven car and had to be satisfied with a seat with the driver on the coach-box. From his seat there he was raising slogans, waving his handkerchief and asking people not to press too close to the leader. In his enthusiasm, little did the young man remember that as a teacher in a college he was expected to remain sedate and superior.

Gokhale and Tilak joined the Congress in 1889. No one of Gokhale's age could remain aloof from that national body, if he had some service to render to the country. Mr. A. O. Hume wanted fifty good men and true of unselfishness, moral courage and self-control, men imbued with the active spirit of service to dedicate their lives to establishing a democratic government in India. Gokhale could be counted as one amongst them. The national cause

was later to attract hundreds and hundreds of young men but few of such promise.

Neither Gokhale nor Tilak was present when the Congress was born. Ranade was one of the founders of the Congress and it was his noble inspiration that prompted Gokhale to cast his lot with that body. Poona, indeed, was to have had the honour of playing host to the first session of the Congress, but, on account of an outbreak of an epidemic, the venue was shifted to Bombay. In 1889, the Congress session was again held at Bombay. Sir William Wedderburn was the President. The number of delegates present in the Congress of 1889 was, by some coincidence, exactly 1889. Charles Bradlaugh, M. P., was present at the session at which a resolution was considered on how legislative councils for India should be formed by bringing in a Bill in Parliament. The resolution proved to be controversial. Tilak moved an amendment to the effect that the members of the Supreme Legislature should be elected by the members of the Provincial Legislative Councils. Gokhale seconded that amendment. Taking into consideration the relations of these leaders as these developed later on, this was to be a rare occasion. The amendment was lost. But this was the only public occasion on which both Tilak and Gokhale agreed. The amendment originated from Ranade and therefore there was nothing surprising that Gokhale should give it his support.

Gokhale attended almost all the Congress sessions till the end of his life except in 1903 when he was busy working on a Select Committee, and in 1913 and 1914 when he was ill. He took an active part in the deliberations of the Congress and used to speak on the resolutions before it when called upon to do so. His power of expression, his intimate knowledge of the subject under consideration and his manner of developing an argument created an excellent impression on the leaders of

the Congress who came to look upon him as a coming man.

The resolutions passed by the Congress at the initial stages were mild and innocuous. They were of the nature of modest demands, but even to get them accepted by the unwilling authorities was a great feat. However, the efforts were worthwhile: they opened the eyes of the people at home and abroad to conditions in India.

The set of resolutions passed at the first Congress session (1885) demanded :

(1) Appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the Indian administration;

(2) The abolition of the India Council;

(3) Elected members for the Legislative Councils;

(4) The right to put interpellations in the Councils;

(5) The creation of Legislative Councils in N.W.P. & Oudh and in the Punjab;

(6) The Standing Committee of the House of Commons to consider formal protests from majorities in the Councils;

(7) The holding of simultaneous examinations for I.C.S. and raising the age of admission for appearing for them; and,

(8) The scaling down of military expenditure.

These resolutions spotlighted the issues on which the representatives in the Councils were expected to agitate. Some of the leaders in the Congress were also members of

legislatures and thus they were given a mandate, as it were, to do their best for getting these proposals adopted. It was no easy task; it took long years for even simple demands to be accepted.

Gokhale was coming up in the Congress. He impressed the elders. Very soon he was appointed one of the secretaries of the Congress as a session was to be held at Poona. Tilak was the other secretary. Before dealing with this session, it is necessary to know how things stood at Poona.

Poona, more than any other city in India, had living memories of the days when Indians were their own rulers. The writ of the British Government ran, no doubt, but the doughtier citizens never looked upon it as a divine dispensation. Some of the younger man had no qualms about throwing off the yoke by violent means if possible. These revolutionaries had many passive sympathizers. Tilak was no advocate of terrorism. But he wanted to keep the fire of nationalism burning, and he had no patience with a slavish mentality. His dream was deliverance from foreign rule. It should not be thought that the moderate school led by Ranade cared less for the restoration of national dignity than Tilak. But Pherozeshah Mehta or Wacha could not be expected to be stirred by the past history of the Marathas, or to be inspired by the story of Shivaji, or to take up the Ganapati festival with enthusiasm. Tilak had revived the Shivaji festival and the Ganapati festival in 1893-94 and had captured the mass mind.

Both the groups were happy that a Congress session was to be held at Poona and both wanted the session to be a success. But the inner differences could not be kept concealed for long. Let us consider the leaders. Ranade was respected but not loved. His faults, according to his opponents, were that he was too much of a moralist, too much

of a devotee of social reforms and too much of a believer in the goodness and greatness of the rulers. When it was insisted that, along with the holding of the Congress session, the Social Reform Conference should also be held in the same place, some people got very upset. They would not allow it. The issue grew into a major controversy in Poona. People refused to be enrolled as members of the Congress Reception Committee in large numbers unless the Social Reforms Conference was shifted elsewhere. The date of the Congress session was fast approaching. Tilak, as a secretary of the Congress session, pleaded with his supporters that nothing would be lost if the Social Conference was allowed to be held in the same *pandal*. But the rift grew. Now Pherozeshah Mehta, with his great influence in the Congress, came on the scene. He suggested three more names—Wacha, Setalvad and D. A. Khare—for the secretaryship to tide over the storm. Tilak's followers, however, made it difficult for him to continue his secretaryship and he had to resign.

With Tilak's resignation the problem was not solved. Meetings were held at Poona at which threats were held out that the Congress *pandal* would be set fire to if the Social Reform Conference was held there. Hundreds of telegrams were sent to Surendranath Banerjea, the President-elect of the Congress, asking him to have the place of the Conference changed. Ranade saw that these differences would create a poor impression on the minds of the delegates coming from all parts of the country and also strengthen the hands of the Government. He took a decision, much against his will, to hold the Social Reform Conference elsewhere. At no previous session of the Congress had there been objection to the holding of the Conference in the Congress *pandal*; but Ranade wanted to avoid an unseemly show-down.

In this trying situation Gokhale discharged his secretarial duties calmly and with devotion, although Wacha accused

him of having been an alarmist. Gokhale also edited a daily bulletin during the session, and had earlier successfully collected funds for the session, although he did not get the credit for it.

The Poona session was uneventful but for the episode narrated above. Tilak did not figure prominently either. He, however, organized a large meeting at Poona, where the President and other leaders of the Congress were invited and honoured, and where the Shivaji festival was celebrated.

The episode was not of a nature to be forgotten easily. Within ten years of the birth of the Congress there were signs that a rift in the organization was not far off. The Poona session of the Congress thus heralded the parting of the ways between two schools of thought.

9

A Moral Dilemma

On his first visit to England, Gokhale was away from India for about five months, from March 1897 to the end of July 1897. He had known the country only through books and newspapers, and now he had an opportunity to see it personally. Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha, who was with him in London for the Welby Commission, has given us a graphic description of Gokhale's experiences in England.

English social life was altogether new to Gokhale. However, with characteristic meticulousness he had acquainted himself with the etiquette observed in polite society. He did fumble in the beginning but was a quick learner.

It was a miracle, however, that Gokhale was able to spend so much time in England. He had a fall in the waiting-room at Calais on his way from India. That caused injury to his heart, but he was too shy to mention it even to Wacha. He bore the torment silently But how long could he keep it concealed ? On the third day he had to take Wacha into confidence. Though Gokhale stayed with Dadabhai Naoroji, he kept himself at a distance from him. He could not think of claiming familiarity with a *rishi*. Wacha explained to Dadabhai the seriousness of the accident and requested the aid of a good doctor. The doctor arrived. After examining Gokhale he told Wacha and Dadabhai about the seriousness

of the trouble and said that the patient had narrowly escaped death. Treatment followed, and after about three days the danger passed.

Gokhale was ordered not to move from his bed for a fortnight. But who was to look after him and nurse him ? Wacha says, "Luckily for him and for us we had in our house a highly polished lady, belonging to a family claiming lineage from the great Sheridan, exceedingly sympathetic and full of humanity. Mrs. Cosgrave volunteered to be Gokhale's nurse. All through that illness it was she who nursed him. No sister could have nursed better. And none could have kept Gokhale so cheerful and bright all through that serious illness."

The illness was not without its benefits to Gokhale. The company of an elderly lady of much cultivation and discernment helped him to overcome his shyness. He learnt to sit at the dining table with a certain amount of confidence, and converse freely in the company of women. But he continued to be a strict vegetarian and teetotaller.

On the first visit to England Gokhale made the acquaintance of some eminent British statesmen. He was greatly impressed by them, especially John Morley. He made it a point to put on the Maharashtrian turban *(pagadi)* wherever he went in London, be it Parliament House or elsewhere. The colour of the turban was golden orange and Gokhale attracted much attention. According to Wacha, ladies wished to see him wear the turban, much to Gokhale's amusement. Naturally he was spotted out wherever he went. But the turban was not his companion on later visits to England, when Gokhale's dress underwent a change; the turban gave place to the hat.

After his eventful work before the Welby Commission, Gokhale looked forward to returning to an India which would be

appreciative of his work. But destiny ordained otherwise. Instead of laurels and triumph he was to earn censure, abuse and humiliation not only from the Government but from his own countrymen. This was the most painful phase of his life.

While he was in England, India was passing through an ordeal. In the beginning of October 1896, Bombay city had a visitation of plague. In the same year there was famine as well. Under the impact of the two calamities, Bombay became practically a deserted city. But the dispersal of residents created a new problem as the infection was carried wherever people went. The next city to be hit by plague was Poona. The Government could not sit silent and allow the epidemic to spread. They took stringent measures to arrest the spread of the epidemic.

England remembered the vast devastations and deaths that had been brought about by the Black Death in the past. Pressing demands were made from England to the Indian Government to be strict in seeing that the disease did not reach their shores.

On February 4, 1897, a Bill was passed in the Bombay Legislative Council giving powers to Government servants to take whatever steps they thought essential to arrest the spread of the epidemic. Those powers were not very different from the powers given under martial law. There was strong but unavailing opposition from the Indian side to giving officials such wide powers. Rules were readily framed for the implementation of the Act and resentment knew no bounds. People preferred death from plague to becoming victims of these measures.

In Bombay City, those in authority used the powers judiciously and reasonably. But in Poona things took a serious turn. One Mr Rand was appointed as Special Officer for adopting strict measures to check the epidemic. He sought the aid of

military personnel for inspecting and disinfecting every house, for segregating people suspected of infection, and for removing them forcibly to specially started hospitals. The whole place presented a scene of war. A reign of terror ensued. The soldiers were all Europeans. No Indian accompanied them. They had no consideration for Indian susceptibilities,no respect for Indian religious and social scruples. Tilak was all the while protesting that these measures were worse than the disease. He demonstrated, by opening a private hospital, in what manner things could be managed better. But the Government was not in the mood to listen to the critics.

People were panic-stricken and frantic. The soldiers did not know how to respect the sentiments of the people. An orthodox uppercaste Hindu considered his kitchen and place of worship as sacred and had reservations regarding persons of a different faith intruding uninvited. The soldiers did both, to the horror of the people. There was mounting indignation but no remedy in sight.

On June 22, 1897, Rand and his colleague, Lt. Ayerst, were shot at while they were returning from Government House after attending a dinner in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's rule. Ayerst died on the spot but Rand was removed to a hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries after eleven days.

Poona was aghast. People had died in thousands, many had run away to save their lives, and houses had been disfigured with marks denoting the visitation of plague. The attack on the two officers itself took place some two months after the fury of the epidemic had subsided. Chaphekar and others were ultimately arrested for the murder, tried and hanged.

All sorts of rumours were afloat about the misdeeds and

brutalities of the soldiers. Gokhale used to receive papers from India which gave horrifying descriptions of the happenings. His indignation was aroused. He would not have believed what the other papers wrote; but when he read his own paper *Sudharak* writing in uncontrollable fury, he was convinced of the horrors perpetrated at Poona. *Sudharak*, in its articles of April 12, April 19 and May 10, 1897, went to the extent of inciting people to retaliate and not to take the excesses lying down. In one of the articles *Sudharak* said : "Fie upon you ! Your mothers, your sisters, your wives are outraged and still you are calm ! Even the animals would not be so tolerant and passive. Are you so impotent ! The most unbearable thing that is shattering the innermost recesses of the heart is not the oppression of the soldiers so much, as your cowardice and your impotence." Another time it wrote : "Till now they were committing thefts, but now they are laying hands on your women ! In spite of this your blood is not boiling ? What a shame ! It must be admitted that we will not find cowards like Indians in any part of the world Are you weeping like old ladies ? Can't you teach law to these brutes ?" *Sudharak* was more vehement in its attack on the Rand regime than *Kesari.*

On April 12 add 13, Gokhale was being cross-examined by the Welby Commission about the time his paper was pouring forth words of fury India, or rather his own Poona, was not in the mood to appreciate the triumph of Gokhale in a distant land. Probably, no paper in India took a lively interest in the skirmishes with the Commission in which Gokhale came out a hero; but it is a matter for admiration that Gokhale did not at that time allow himself to be swayed by the events at home. He carried on his task with singleness of purpose.

Only after getting out of the Commission room could Gokhale find time to go through the papers and the letters that he had received from his colleagues and friends which

gave more information regarding the reign of terror in Poona. Prof. V. K. Rajwade of the Fergusson College, H. N. Apte, the great novelist of Poona, Sardar Natu, Pandita Ramabai and others had sent him harrowing tales. A report to the effect that two women had been violated by soldiers and that one of them had committed suicide upset Gokhale greatly. What could he do ? He was in England where he could ask the authorities to take immediate steps to stop these excesses which were tarnishing its fair name. He consulted his colleagues. Sir William Wedderburn advised him to take certain M. P.s into confidence and lay before them whatever material he possessed. He did so, but did not stop there. He published a letter over his own signature in *The Manchester Guardian.* In it he mentioned the reported violation of the two women. This created a great sensation in England, Englishmen being very sensitive in matters which affect their culture and the tradition of their regard for women. Instead of trying to get at the truth and mend matters, there was an outcry. The insult was too much for them to bear. The Government was not in a mood to consider the charge judiciously and fairly.

The Bombay Government was directly involved in the charge. It made inquiries and informed the Government in England that the charge had been concocted out of malice and hatred. Lord Sandhurst, the head of the Bombay Government, resorted to a novel method of getting at the truth. His department framed some questions on the Plague Relief Administration and sent them telegraphically to five hundred selected citizens of Poona and asked them to reply telegraphically. None of the replies so received corroborated what Gokhale had stated. How could they have done so ? The whole atmosphere was surcharged with terror and vengeance. Anyone supporting Gokhale would have been victimized. The period for sending the replies was stated to be twenty-four hours ! The gentlemen were not given

sufficient time even to make enquiries before replying. Comment is needless. The Government came out 'victorious'. All that the papers had said, all that people had undergone, was false. The soldiers and the authorities had behaved most properly, most humanely and in the interests of the people. Can we believe in this, did the 500 notable citizens believe in what they said ? Gokhale was called the villain of the piece; his charges were false and malicious ! Another person, of a different mould, would have sent another letter to some other paper stating that the replies had been extorted improperly.

Gokhale's cup of misery was full. Even his friends and admirers turned critics. The Secretary of State for India in a triumphant mood replied in the House of Commons, on the authority of the Bombay Government, that the charges made by Gokhale were false and baseless.

According to Wacha, Gokhale ought not to have sent the original letter to *The Manchester Guardian* without taking proper precautions. Wacha could not place himself in the position of Gokhale. Gokhale had in his possession letters from friends whom he could trust as much as he could trust himself. What was he to do ? Tell his friends that the letters sent by them were lacking in corroborative evidence and that he could not act on them ? Poona was full of human suffering and if a spokesman of Poona, who was fortunately in England at the time, had remained silent, there would have been the charge of apathy and inaction.

Gokhale did the right thing in the circumstances. Under a foreign Government it often becomes impossible to prove a charge despite the best 'evidence'; that does not always mean that the charges are false. The women who were alleged to have been violated would have, as women, denied that they had been violated. Admission would have meant the end of

their family and social life. At the most we can say that though the charges were there, they could not be proved.

Gokhale was perturbed and shaken. He was impulsive, as Wacha remarked, and sensitive. His friends, though well-intentioned, had not made thorough inquiries before preferring the charges. He himself had not been sufficiently careful before rushing into print. The Government machinery was more powerful than the non-official one. People in general lacked the spirit to stand up against the Government. Gokhale's reputation was at stake and the future was dark.

Gokhale and Wacha had planned to tour the Continent. But Gokhale gave up the idea. How could he enjoy the tour when he was at war with himself ? He joined Wacha at Brindisi on July 18, 1897, for the journey home. On board the ship he was not cheerful and avoided company, brooding over the sad incident. There was one Mr Heaton, an I. C. S. officer, who was convinced of the correctness of what Gokhale had done, and he tried to comfort him. The other English passengers looked upon him as one who had maliciously defamed British soldiers.

When the ship reached Aden and was anchored, Gokhale received letters from his friends imploring him not to name them to the Government as having supplied him the information. Whether Gokhale should betray the identity of his friends or not was a different question; but their requesting him not to do so lacked spirit. Had his friends of their own accord boldly declared their identities, Gokhale's responsibility would have lessened. The courage shown by Gokhale in giving publicity to what he had learnt was not shown by his trusted friends.

The ship reached Bombay. What happened thereafter is not

known definitely. Wacha says, "The rest of the disagreeable episode soon after Gokhale's landing in Bombay is history and I studiously refrain from adverting to it."

Two events are recorded in this context. One mentions the visit of the Commissioner of Police of Bombay and the other that of a representative of Pherozeshah Mehta. Why did the Police Commissioner see Gokhale ? It was not a courtesy visit nor was it for arrest or search. Had such a move been contemplated or taken, would it have been legal ? The publication of the letter had taken place in England, though it could be said that, as the paper was circulated in India also, the question of jurisdiction did not arise. But then a complaint ought to have been filed in a Bombay Court and orders for search ought to have been asked for. But no complaint had been filed and no orders had been received. Was the Government afraid that something unpalatable to them would come out of the letters ? The Commissioner must have seen Gokhale in his official capacity to ascertain from him what he intended to do further. Further steps depended on his reply. Gokhale told the Police Commissioner, it was said, that he would do nothing without consulting his friends in India. That left the Government in suspense.

Pherozeshah Mehta's emissary met him on the ship before the Commissioner of Police did and took away all the papers in connection with the statements made in England. The papers must have included the letters of the friends as well. Did Gokhale give these letters, or were they destroyed, or were they handed over to some other person for safe custody? If the Police Commissioner had obtained a search warrant he could have secured all the explosive material. But nothing definite has been given out by any one in this connection. The only definite thing known is that Gokhale went to see Ranade for his advice which he valued most. There was no reception for the meritorious services that

Gokhale had rendered in England. He was in no mood to receive garlands, nor were his friends and admirers in the mood to offer them to him.

Ranade advised Gokhale to go to Poona and try to ascertain whether convincing proofs of what he had stated were available. Gokhale came back to Bombay from Poona and told Ranade that no such evidence could be had. The only course left open to Gokhale was to apologize unconditionally. This was Ranade's advice. In this predicament Tilak would have been of immense use to Gokhale. In *Kesari* of July 20, Tilak had asked the people to send him all the complaints against the soldiers during the plague-relief administration. Tilak wanted to collect all the material and publish it in the Bombay newspapers. But the Government was more alert. Before the evidence could be gathered they arrested Tilak on a charge of sedition. This was on July 27, three days before Gokhale landed in Bombay.

Tilak's biographer, Mr. N. C. Kelkar, says, "Unfortunately there was exaggeration in the statements made by Gokhale. On the one hand, those who supplied him the news without evidence were wrong and on the other Gokhale was wrong in publishing it." Tilak wanted to prove that the oppression by the soldiers was there though he could not prove the part relating to outrages on women as given by Gokhale.

Gokhale published his apology on August 4, 1897, in *The Times of India* and *The Manchester Guardian.* The apology was long and elaborate and it was extended to the people to whom no apology was due, *viz.*, the soldiers. The concluding portion is the saddest of all. Gokhale wrote :

"The late Mr Rand was lying in a critical condition when I addressed them (members of the Indian Parliamentary

Committee) and I said at the outset of my remarks that it was an odious position for anyone to occupy, to have to criticize the Poona plague operations while the officer who had suffered for them was lying in a condition which called for the deepest sympathy and respect from every quarter. And even now, when I fully realize the humiliating position in which my action has placed me, my bitterest regret is caused by the thought that I became the instrument of adding to the anxieties of His Excellency, the Governor, at a time when he must have had the greatest difficulty in preserving the equanimity of his mind. I also feel most keenly that while a few Englishmen at least in this country have been not only just but generous in judging me, I have been much less generous to their countrymen, the soldiers engaged in plague operations, and have made grave, unwarranted charges against them, when they were engaged in work which required that their critics should not only be just to them but even generous. I once more tender an unqualified apology to all, to H.E. the Governor, to the members of the Plague Committee, and to the soldiers engaged in plague operations."

Thus ended a sad chapter in the life of Gokhale. He would have been justified in withdrawing the charges and tendering an apology; but his compliments to the soldiers were unnecessary. This apart, Gokhale deserves every credit for being frank, bold and generous. No man of his stature could have acted otherwise. Tilak and Agarkar had on previous occasions been equally frank in tendering an apology for unknowingly publishing forged letters in the Kolhapur case.

But people in general, and his intimate friends in particular, did not appreciate the language in which the apology was couched and the tone of his thankful recognition of the services of the soldiers. They were witnesses and sufferers in the dark days at Poona. They would have welcomed Gokhale's facing a trial and substantiating at least a part of the charge

he had so boldly made. But Gokhale was of a different mould. He would not defend what could not be defended. And an apology had to be a full one if it was to be a sincere apology.

What was the reaction to the apology in England and India? Lord Sandhurst, the Governor of Bombay, while referring to the apology incident in the Bombay Legislative Council, had not the magnanimity to acknowledge it with good grace. He even avoided mentioning Gokhale's name. Going out of his way he advised Gokhale to make such statements in India, if necessary, where they could be inquired into, and, if untrue, contradicted. It took Lord Sandhurst two years to change his attitude. In the years following, plague broke out again in Poona. Gokhale worked assiduously in the campaign and paid house-to-house visits. Lord Sandhurst remarked in 1899 that "there is no more hard-working, generous and sympathetic worker amongst the plague volunteers than Prof. Gokhale". Compared to Lord Sandhurst his countrymen in England were more generous. Morley spoke to W. S. Caine and had a laugh over the whole incident. Wedderburn and Hume asked Gokhale to cheer up. Hume said : "I don't care twopence about this incident .....Do not fancy that you have lost any ground with us. Do not apologize to us. We look upon you as a martyr to the cause and are more ready than ever to aid, so far as we can, to stand by you."

Gokhale's letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, who, he thought, had looked small in Parliament, because of him, is illuminating. The letter is dated two days after the publication of the apology and in it Gokhale says : "Before my arrival here, the Government had ceased to be British Government and had assumed the role of the Russian Government. Arrests and deportations on the charge of disloyalty had spread such

profound panic in Poona that any kind of substantiation was out of the question. Government, moreover, had decided not to hold a public inquiry into the complaints by a Commission. Retraction, therefore, was the only course left open to me. In the step I have taken I have bowed to circumstances and have acted in accordance with the best advice available. I know my action has done much harm to the cause which is dear to the hearts of us all and which I meant to serve all the while."

Dadabhai sent him a reply in which he advised him thus : "Do your duty perseveringly. You are excitable and I shall be consoled even for your present troubles if you can, after the present painful experience, learn to be cool and calm and to consider a matter before acting. Do not despair."

In the letters written to other friends in England, Gokhale talked about retirement from public life. Being highly sensitive and even sentimental, he could not allow his country to suffer because of him. His well-wishers admonished him not to do so. This idea of retirement was nothing new in Gokhale's life. On February 8, 1896, before he went to England and before the apology incident took place, he wrote a letter to G. V. Joshi in which he said, "I have grown sick of public life in Poona. Recent events have opened my eyes very wide indeed and I am anxious to be relieved of public responsibilities and lead hereafter an entirely retired life." Gokhale had occasional fits of the desire to retire; they did not last long.

The impact of the apology incident was immense. Vasudeo Govind Apte, the editor of *Dnyanprakash* and an admirer, was asked by Gokhale once what he felt about the whole thing. Apte said that Gokhale's conduct had subjected the country to a great humiliation. Gokhale was grieved to hear this from his intimate associate. However, he soon

regained his optimism. Gokhale said, "A day will come when I shall bring glory to my country by way of compensation for the wrong I am alleged to have done, and then critics of your type who are bringing me to the verge of death, will be converted into my admirers."

An extract from Gokhale's statement deserves reproduction in this connection : "I have no doubt about the ultimate verdict on my conduct. The day will come when it will be generally recognized by my countrymen that this most unfortunate incident deserves to be thought of, as far as I am concerned, in sorrow and not in anger, and that under most trying circumstances I had taken the only course which was consistent with duty and honour. Mean-while, I am content to wait. Trials and troubles, accepted in the right spirit, only chasten and elevate .....Public duties, undertaken at the bidding of no man cannot be laid down at the desire of anyone."

As subsequent events showed, Gokhale fulfilled his promises. The momentary set-back was agonizing; it also enabled him to respond to the call of duty with redoubled energy and vigour.

On January 8, 1898, Gokhale published a letter in *The Times of India* defending his apology. A very important letter, some portions of it throw light on the workings of his mind : "As regards the opinion that I should not have retracted at all, but taken whatever consequences might have ensued, I must say that those who express this opinion do not know what they are talking about ..It is precisely because I did not lack the sort of courage that was needed to face my trouble like a man, that I took the course which has brought so much obloquy on me ..There was never any personal danger for me as the expression is ordinarily understood. Owing to technical difficulties, if for no other consideration, the law could not have been set in motion against me. But the very fact that the

injured parties had no legal redress against me, only made my responsibilities as a gentleman greater...

"If I had known anything personally, I should certainly have adhered to that. I knew nothing, and with the exception of Pandita Ramabai, very few persons were firm. The Pandita's statements had, however, nothing to do with the conduct of the search parties, to which alone my complaints had reference and I could not honestly take my stand on them...

".. it seems to be believed in some quarters that my retraction was due to a threat held out by the Police Commissioner on board the steamer. The suggestion is most unjust both to the Government and myself. Mr Vincent, who behaved with great tact and consideration, left it entirely to me to decide whether I would meet his wishes and have a talk with him on the steamer. His object, as far as I could see, appeared to be to get from me the names of the correspondents and if possible to have a sight of the letters also, to commit me, if he could, to specific details about the supposed aggrieved parties, before I had seen anyone on the shore. I declined politely but firmly to oblige him in any of the particulars, merely telling him that he might rely on my acting in a perfectly straightforward manner in the matter."

10

In the Bombay Legislative Council

GOKHALE'S JOY WAS great when he learnt that he had won the election to the Bombay Legislative Council in 1899. It was his first success, which was to be followed by many more. His performance before the Welby Commission had proved that he was a fit person to cross swords with the Government in the legislative forum. The apology incident was forgotten and the Government had also overcome their resentment and begun to treat him with the respect due to his intellect and nobility. Gokhale was his old self. More service, more struggle and suffering in the cause of the country—all this was what he desired. Ranade was still there to help and guide him.

The Provincial Councils of those days had a packed official majority. Even the few elective seats were not filled by direct election. The Central Division of the Bombay Presidency, consisting of six districts, was allotted a seat, to be filled by the District Local Boards. It was this seat that Gokhale sought. Tilak had twice been elected from this constituency, in 1895 and again in 1897. In the latter year he was sentenced to a year and half for sedition. The sentence was reduced by half a year and he came out on September 6, 1898. Tilak would have liked to be returned for the third time, mainly in order to demonstrate to the Government that the people had faith in him. He tried to feel the pulse of the members of the

District Boards. He found that they were not bold enough to defy the Government openly though they had sympathy for him. Tilak gave up the idea of contesting the election. Gokhale's path was thus clear and he won the election. His success was hailed amidst great rejoicings. His work in the Council was to be but a preparation for his historic work in the larger arena of the Imperial Legislative Council.

Gokhale as a member of the Legislature was never a back-bencher. Even as a young new-comer he made his presence felt. He took a lively interest in the proceedings, and made effective interventions. His mind and manner had a natural affinity with parliamentary politics.

Gokhale took special interest in three important problems in the Bombay Legislative Council : the Famine Code, the Land Alienation Bill, and the working of municipalities. The agricultural population of the Province had still not recovered from the ravages of famine of 1896. Gokhale had already shown, in his evidence before the Welby Commission, how the income derived from the tax for famine relief was mis-spent by the Government for paying dividends on the losing private railway undertakings. As secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and the Deccan Sabha he had drafted several memorials, submitted several representations and come in contact with the suffering people. He was conversant with their sorrows and sufferings.

The Famine Code had been in existence for several years. But it was not being worked properly. The Government had good intentions, no doubt, but these needed to be translated into action. Gokhale took the first opportunity to criticize the Code and he did it ably. According to the Code, some minimum relief works came to be started and gratuitous relief was given in a niggardly manner. The Code was in fact rigidly administered. Gokhale was opposed to the starting of relief works at places away from the homes of the famine-stricken

peasantry. No peasant or labourer could afford to be away from his home for any length of time. There was also the fact that where a large population was concentrated there was the fear of the outbreak of epidemics. Gokhale, therefore, suggested the starting of small-scale industries in the famine-affected areas themselves. Too strenuous labour was expected of the famine-stricken people who had generally no stamina or vigour. By exacting such work, the Government was defeating the very purpose of famine relief. The petty officials had the tendency to impose fines if a certain amount of work was not done. As regards gratuitous relief, Gokhale showed how the Bombay Government was less generous than other Governments in giving the relief. Though the Code was good, its working was bad. According to him such relief measures should be administered in a human way.

By reason of his personal acquaintance with the affected people, and his thorough grasp of the working of the Code, Gokhale came to be regarded as an authority on famine relief almost at the outset of his legislative career. This reputation was to be with him throughout life. It was not without impact on Government policies, and it secured for him, in abundant measure, the people's gratitude and love.

Maharashtra experienced a series of calamities in those years. Famine and plague, Hindu-Muslim riots, the Crawford incident and certain other events had unnerved its people. Plague took a heavy toll every year. On the one side there was the unrelenting Government ever ready to put down even the least show of resistance; on the other, there were the leaders who were divided amongst themselves. The people themselves were ground down by suffering, and there were no signs of any positive steps being taken for the amelioration of their condition. People were growing desperate and began to hate the Government intensely, though this was not going to help them. The need was for constructive thinkers who would see that

the people's feelings did not run into frustration, and Gokhale was pre-eminent among such purposeful leaders.

On May 30, 1901, the Bombay Government introduced a Land Alienation Bill in the Legislative Council. The non-official members attacked the Bill so severely that, though it was passed, it remained a dead letter. The press, the political associations and the peasants in general were not less outspoken. Tilak wrote a number of articles in *Kesari* supporting the non-official section in the Council and opposing the Government.

As often happens with bad Bills, it was the letter rather than the spirit that was repugnant. Lands in the Bombay Presidency were being sold in large numbers by petty and big landowners alike to the money-lenders because of famine and other causes. There was strong criticism everywhere that the indebtedness of the peasantry was growing alarmingly; if it was not checked early, the peasantry would be turned out of land and the class of landless labourers would increase. The Government, therefore, brought in the measure to make lands inalienable. The peasant proprietor could mortgage the standing crop to the money-lender but not the land. The Government thought that indebtedness would decrease by this measure. But what was to become of the land revenue? The land-owner borrowed money from the village *sowcars* by mortgaging his land and used to pay the Government dues. As the land was to be made inalienable he could not sell it or mortgage it; the result would be that the Government would confiscate it. After confiscation, it could be given to the same tenant but in case of his failure to pay the dues the following year, he would be driven from the land and be made a vagrant.

The remedy proposed for the removal of indebtedness was worse than the disease. The Government, Gokhale said, could

have taken up land improvement measures as also shown the way to increase the yield. They could have saved the peasant from the clutches of the money-lenders; they could have started land mortgage banks or co-operative credit societies or agricultural banks and thus arrested indebtedness to a certain extent.

Gokhale had studied this problem thoroughly and his arguments were irrefutable. He suggested that this piece of legislation should be postponed and a comprehensive inquiry made into the whole question. He did not agree with the Government that the indebtedness of the peasantry had been greater under Muslim rule. He proved that poverty and indebtedness had increased under British rule. He regretted the unbecoming haste in their bringing forward the measure, even the notice required having been ignored. The Bombay Government, as also the Secretary of State, asserted that the agitation against the Bill was carried on by the supporters of money-lenders. Gokhale convincingly refuted the malicious charge by saying, "It is because I believe that this Bill will prove disastrous to the best interests of the agriculturists and not because it is likely to do any harm to the money-lenders that I deem it my duty to resist the passing of this measure to the utmost of my power."

Gokhale envisaged another danger if the Bill was passed. "The Bill", he said, "means nationalization of forfeited lands which alters completely the character of the land-tenure in this Presidency." He made the constructive suggestion that the experiment, if it was to be made at all, should be made in a small area. The Government should take over the debts of the ryots from the *sowcars*, start agricultural banks and then declare their lands inalienable.

Gokhale's ability in marshalling facts, rebutting official arguments, pressing home his point of view and making

constructive suggestions, came in for praise. But in spite of opposition from the non-official members, the Government carried the measure through. In protest, the non-official members led by Pherozeshah Mehta walked out of the Legislative Council. Gokhale also followed them. He said to Mehta : "I would rather be in the wrong with you, than in the right by myself." Before staging the walk-out he made a short statement : "I take this course with the greatest reluctance and regret. I do not mean any disrespect to Your Excellency or to your colleagues personally. It is an over-whelming sense of duty which urges me to take this step because I am not prepared to accept even the remotest responsibility of associating myself with this measure which my further presence here will imply." Gokhale's statement was not liked by Pherozeshah Mehta : it was, said Mehta, unnecessary and the Government did not deserve it; they had forfeited all claim to such treatment. But Gokhale thought differently. Fight from the beginning to the end, and even when defeated , do not give in; this seems to have been his motto. Gokhale's suggestions about co-operative credit banks and land mortgage banks were so wise that the Government accepted them later. This was delayed victory, a victory still.

The third problem which was on the legislative anvil during Gokhale's short term of membership of the Bombay Legislative Council was the amendment of the District Municipal Act. He was not a member of the House when the Bill was introduced, but he was elected when the Bill was in the Select Committee stage and he was appointed to that Committee. The stand he took, firmly opposing the principle of communal representation in these organizations, deserves to be noted. His view was that, though there were differences amongst the different sections in the land, the legislatures should not recognize these differences. According to him there was nothing in local self-government which implied any conflict between the interests of one section and another. But Gokhale's pleading

was in vain. Communal electorates became the law of the land and grievous results were to follow. How happy the country would have been if Gokhale's wise words had been accepted not only in the self-governing organizations but in larger bodies as well !

Gokhale was outstanding as a legislator because he combined three unusual qualities : incisive analysis, felicitous expression and a manner wholly removed from ostentation. He never sought to score a skilful point. Whatever he said bore the impress of earnestness, and arose from the inner urge to seek the welfare of the downtrodden masses. His words gave expression to what his heart felt. His advocacy of prohibition, as of the cause of famine sufferers, sprang from his solicitude for the welfare of the people. The Government permitted the selling of intoxicating drinks. The poor with their scanty resources became a prey to this deadly evil. Gokhale believed sincerely that the principle of total prohibition should be followed by the Government for preventing the utter ruin of the poor. Even in 1897, when he appeared before the Welby Commission in England, he had expressed this view at a Temperance Conference. He had said : "I will state frankly at the outset that personally I am a prohibitionist and I believe that total prohibition is really in keeping with the sentiments of the Indian people." The Indian National Congress, then and later, was a champion of prohibition. Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhiji and many other eminent men, it is well to recall, were staunch prohibitionists.

Gokhale contended that Government inaction in this regard was due to interest in the revenue derived from drink. He had two concrete suggestions to make in order to sever this link—that the revenue authorities should not be the licensing authorities, and that the system of putting up licences to auction should be abolished. He did not think that consumption could be restricted by raising the price of intoxicating drinks;

that would only take away more money from the pockets of the poor.

While he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, Gokhale continued to work in the Fergusson College. It was in 1902 that he went on furlough preparatory to retirement. His membership of the Council, far from being a hindrance to his work in the College, proved to be helpful for expanding its activities. Some of the life-members of the Deccan Education Society became members of legislatures, and this association has persisted to the present day.

Gokhale could not restrict his activities to two fields only. He was wanted everywhere. The public, the University, and the municipality—all sought his services. As days passed and the Government came to know of what stuff he was made, even they could not do without him. He grew with his opportunities. There is something impressive about the emergence of character in public life. And the imprint of Gokhale's devotion and purity of character can be seen in all that he did.

11

In the Imperial Legislative Council

WHEN RANADE DIED in January 1901, Gokhale felt orphaned; for Ranade had been not only his Master but like a father to him. Only the day previous to his bereavement Gokhale had written a letter to Pherozeshah Mehta in which he had requested that an opportunity should be accorded to him to go to the Supreme Legislative Council. He was about to retire from the Fergusson College, he said, in order to devote the rest of his life to political work in India and England. His wife was no more. He had built up a small income of Rs. 125 a month and enjoyed a pension of Rs. 30 from the College. He desired ardently to make himself useful to the country. Praising the talents of Mehta and the unique place occupied by him, Gokhale wrote, "I beg to assure you, it is no mere personal ambition which is urging me to seek the honour." The storm of 1897 and the incidents that had followed had wounded him, especially Mancherji Bhownaggree's denunciation of him in the House of Commons as a 'despicable perjurer'. Gokhale wrote, "The night I read them, I made up my mind to devote my life to the furtherance of our political cause in England to which I had, without meaning it, done a serious injury."

The letter from the young friend and worthy colleague moved Mehta and had the desired effect. There were some

other aspirants for the membership; but Mehta prevailed upon them to allow Gokhale to secure the honour without contest. It was early in 1902 at the age of thirty six that Gokhale was returned to the Supreme Legislative Council. He was to have the privilege of being similarly returned unanimously to the Council on three other successive occasions.

The election to the Supreme Legislative Council was the turning point in his life. The Servants of India Society, which he founded later, would no doubt have been his stronghold wherefrom he could have waged many a battle; but it is a moot question if he would have succeeded as much as he did on the floor of the Council.

There were three types of men in those days in Maharashtra. Ranade was one : he did not shine either in Council or on the public platform despite his colossal scholarship, intellect and regard for the welfare of the people. It was not given to Tilak to be a successful parliamentarian although his whole life and activities had been spent among the people. He fought all his battles in his chosen field, standing firmly and resolutely. Gokhale, for his part, never sought the public platform as the place from where to launch attacks on the rulers. His gifts were ideal for legislative chambers.

Between 1902 and 1911 Gokhale made eleven speeches on the Budget and thirty-six other speeches of importance. The subjects and occasions varied. He always showed mastery, although he was at his best when speaking on the intricacies of finance and the country's economy. The speeches have a historical value now, but had very much of a topical importance and interest then. Gokhale never played to the gallery. Thoroughness in preparation and sincerity made his speeches masterpieces of lasting value.

Amongst the subjects which he spoke on were : The Official Secrets Act, The Indian Universities Act, The Cooperative

Credit Societies Act, The Seditious Meetings Act, The Press Bill, reduction or avoidance of debt, Railway finance, increase in public expenditure, the cotton excise duties, import duty on sugar, the public services, the taxable minimum of income, The Civil Marriage Bill, indentured labour, the cost of building New Delhi, surpluses and reserves, gold currency, and The Elementary Education Bill. These speeches bear the imprint of indefatigable study, a liberal outlook and an abiding interest in every thing that would advance the interests of the country.

The subjects which he pointedly dealt with in his budget speeches were the salt duty, Army expenditure, currency surpluses, the Indianization of services, and taxation.

The burden of his speeches was the refusal of responsible government to India, the refusal of elementary rights to the people of the land, the refusal of justice and fair play, the refusal of civil liberties, and the denial of opportunity for India to achieve economic and industrial progress. In his view the British bureaucrats were arrogant and were intent only on exploiting the poor of India for the benefit of their own country. This had brought about poverty, emasculated the people and made them servile. No civilized Government could keep the people ignorant or deny them the elementary right of literacy. India was losing her soul, her self-respect and her industrial skills, and Indians were being reduced to the status of serfs.

In his fight against the bureaucracy, Gokhale's approach was constitutional. His endeavour was to build his case on facts and logic and through persuasion to bring about a change of heart in those who counted. His own faith in British ideas of justice and fair play was so firm that he was unwilling to dismiss British officials in India as beyond reclaim. It was an uphill task that he undertook but it was done tenaciously, assiduously and single-mindedly. Gokhale was an optimist of

a rare kind. No ridicule could dishearten him, no temptation demoralize him, no praise weaken him.

Gokhale's first speech on the Indian Budget was remarkable alike for its large vision and its mastery of facts. It spotlighted the injustice in the rising spiral of taxation, and it brought out his deep concern over the growing poverty of the people. The Government of Lord Curzon was complacent as there were surpluses in the Budget. Gokhale showed how the surpluses were illusory. The exchange value of the rupee in terms of sterling was 13.1d in 1894-95. In 1895-96 it was 13.6d; in 1896-97 it was 14.4d; in 1897-98 it was 15.3d. In 1898-99 the exchange was stabilized at 16d. Gokhale said, "A rise of 3d in the exchange value of the rupee from 13d to 16d means a saving of between four and five crores of rupees to the Government of India on their Home charges alone, and I think this fact is sufficient by itself to explain the huge surpluses of the last four or five years." He showed that the credit for the surpluses in the budget did not go to the Government. The value of the rupee had appreciated. Gokhale's point was that the Government was imposing additional taxes in spite of surpluses, it was misusing the surpluses and not spending them on ameliorating the condition of the people.

Reverting to the theme in his speech on the Budget the following year, Gokhale said that between 1898 and 1903 the Government had made a saving of Rs. 22 crores from surpluses, but had spent Rs. 11 crores on extraordinary charges from the current revenues during the same period. According to Gokhale, the surpluses ought to have been Rs. 33 crores. Since the Government was fortunate in having surpluses, his plea was that the salt duty should be reduced, the exemption limit for income-tax raised from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 and the cotton excise duty should be abolished. The Budget of that year did reduce the duty on salt and some of the taxes, but did not make any change in the excise duty on cotton. If the Govern-

ment had yielded in two cases out of three, it was undoubtedly the result of Gokhale's powerful advocacy, though there were others, including the Indian National Congress, who had been pressing for these reliefs.

As regards the excise duty on cotton, the Government of India in essence was an agent of British interests. To benefit the textile industry of Manchester and the rest of Lancashire, it supported the policy of free trade. Even then Indian textiles had a certain advantage. To wipe out the advantage the Government imposed an excise duty on cotton, and thus placed the textile industry in England on a par with the industry in this country. The Indian textile industry was in its infancy and any government of the people would have imposed protective duties to help it. In those days India exported foodgrains to England. The British Government did not subject their indigenous production of foodgrains to any excise duty. All this was obviously gross injustice but to whom could an appeal be made ?

Gokhale's Budget speech of 1903 also dealt with other subjects of importance, such as excessive military expenditure, discrimination in the Civil Services and the neglect of primary education. The surpluses were consumed by the increasing expenditure on the military. Gokhale said, "Indian finance is virtually at the mercy of military considerations and no well-sustained or vigorous effort by the State on an adequate scale for the material advancement or the moral progress of the people is possible while our revenues are liable to be appropriated in an ever-increasing proportion for military purposes." Nevertheless, the Government was keen on showing that the country was progressing economically under British rule. Gokhale was at his best in assailing this claim. He showed convincingly that the Indian Government was spending only 8d per child on education, whereas in England the amount was 60d.

Gokhale was a great believer in the efficacy of cogent argument, and people in general were perturbed by his revelations. The Government also sensed that its prestige was declining steeply. Extremists might ask, "What next ?" But Gokhale was content with the task of undermining the moral pretensions of Government. He was not out to preach direct action or defiance of the Government. Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience were left to his disciple, Mahatma Gandhi, to undertake in the years to come.

The Budget of 1904 gave Gokhale little scope for the exercise of his unusual powers of critical analysis. The year reported a substantial surplus of Rs. 6.72 crores, out of which Rs. 2.65 crores were given as special grants to the Provincial Governments. Such a huge surplus was unprecedented in the history of Indian finance. Gokhale, therefore, looked back to the period preceding the six years when the budgetary situation had improved. In the earlier fourteen years the total surplus had been Rs. 17½ crores, and the total deficit Rs. 19½ crores. But in the six years the surplus was Rs. 29 crores. The change had been brought about obviously by the change in the exchange rate. The rupee rose in value from 13d to 18d, thus bringing about a saving of Rs. 5 crores in the remittances on account of Home charges. The income from revenue on opium had also increased. From Rs. 5 crores it had gone up to Rs. 8 crores. Thus in 1904, Rs. 5 crores was the saving from Home charges and Rs. 3½ crores was the additional revenue from opium. The total came to Rs. 8½ crores. Out of this surplus, the reduction on the salt duty by 8 annas per maund and income-tax reduction both accounted for Rs. 2 crores, leaving a surplus of Rs. 6½ crores.

Gokhale brought to the notice of the Government that the prices of consumer goods were rising as a result of the appreciation of the rupee. Gokhale repeated his demand of the previous year for the abolition of the excise duty on cotton

and a further reduction of eight annas on a maund of salt. The new demand which he made was the reduction of land revenue in Bombay, Madras and N. W. Provinces. He showed how land revenue was adding to the miseries of the people who had already been laid low by famine and failure of crops. More consumption could be inferred, though not correctly, from the steady rise in the prices of essential goods. It could have been as well said that short supply of goods was the cause of the rise in prices. But there was another rise. Gokhale said, "There is the clearest evidence to show that the curse of drink is on the increase, especially among the lower classes and wild aboriginal tribes, spreading ruin and misery among them." The remedy that he suggested was total prohibition. In the Budget speech, he also referred to the export and import policy to which he was to devote more attention in later years.

In 1905 the Viceroy was the same, but the Finance Member had changed, Sir Edward Baker having succeeded Sir Edward Law. That year, too, was a year of surplus. Gokhale highly complimented the new Finance Member on his grasp of principle and mastery of detail as seen from the Financial Statement. He conveyed to him the popular satisfaction over the Government decision to utilize the excess income of Rs. $3\frac{3}{4}$ crores for remission of taxation, administrative improvement and the general well-being of the people. The duty on salt was further reduced by eight annas per maund. Gokhale was not dissatisfied with the reduction, though he would have preferred further reduction. In that year the Government abolished the famine cess, revised the postal rates in favour of the people, and gave more pay to the low-paid police staff. Rs. 35 lakhs were given as a grant to the Provincial Governments for additional expenditure on primary education and for agricultural research. There were also the grants to District Local Boards amounting to Rs. 20 lakhs.

In the course of his speech, Gokhale showed how during the preceding seven years the surpluses amounted to more than Rs. 32½ crores, leaving aside the profits on the coinage of rupees which came to another Rs. 12½ crores. The Government had set apart that sum for building up a Gold Reserve Fund. He had no objection to the building up of such a Fund; but he could not countenance the rise in Army and other expenditure. He further objected to the utilization of the surpluses for the reduction of debt which came to about Rs. 5 crores on an average every year. His contention was that the surpluses should be spent on the welfare of the people and not on redeeming the debts. He based his argument on the principle that current revenues ought not to be spent on non-recurring charges.

The Government of those days had taken loans for purposes other than national development. Its military operations in and out of India were mainly responsible for the debts. Gokhale's objection was therefore justified. But the story did not end there. The Government had provided for the expenditure of Rs. 3 crores 66 lakhs in that year's budget for reorganizing the Army. The Army reorganization scheme was to cost Rs. 3 crores a year in the subsequent years as well. Gokhale was at his best in assailing this expenditure as unwanted and unwarranted. The Government, depending as it did on the military for stabilizing its rule in this country, had to make it as strong and as invulnerable as it possibly could. In his speech Gokhale also referred to the excessive increase in land revenue in some of the provinces to the point of its becoming intolerable.

By the time the next Budget was presented, Lord Curzon had gone and Lord Minto presided over the Imperial Legislative Council. Nineteen hundred and six also was a surplus year. Gokhale made various useful suggestions to the Government for improving the lot of the people.

The Finance Member himself had come out strongly in favour of reduction of the salt duty, thus supporting Gokhale's consistent stand over the years. Gokhale wanted a further reduction by bringing the duty to Re. 1 per maund, as had been done in Burma. The Government had also abolished certain cesses on the land and discontinued certain appropriations from the funds of District and Local Boards for provincial purposes. Gokhale conveyed to the Government the feelings of the people over this benevolent step, but did not rest there. He went on to plead for more finances for the District and Local Boards. These boards were getting one anna in the rupee as cess from land revenue That, however, was not an assured source of income, because in case of remission or suspension of land revenue due to famine or other causes, the District and Local Boards lost even their small share. Gokhale suggested that on such occasions the Government should give them grants in proportion to the loss.

Another of Gokhale's suggestions concerned the utilization of the Gold Reserve Fund. Instead of investing the funds in Consols at 2¾ per cent and borrowing at the same time at 3½ per cent, why should not the funds be made available to agriculturists who would pay more interest ?

Gokhale referred to the Army reorganization scheme again. The Russian bogey had disappeared and the Anglo-Japanese alliance had been signed. The danger of war had vanished and there was complete peace on all fronts in the Middle East and Far East and at home. Gokhale could therefore ask, with sound logic, "Why do you pursue the scheme of Army reorganization and spend Rs. 3 crores on it ?" If that scheme is to be executed at all why should not England bear a part of the expenditure ? Although Gokhale criticized the whole military policy of the Government with a mastery deserving close study, his was a cry in the wilderness. His main objection

to the policy was the want of faith of the Government in the Indian people. Whole areas were excluded from military service for one reason or the other, creating dissatisfaction amongst the people.

In his evidence before the Welby Commission, Gokhale had taken the Government to task for the policy in regard to constructing Railways. In his speech on the budget of 1906, he returned to the old grievance. He said, "During the last eight years, the surpluses of the Government of India have amounted to no less a sum than Rs. 35 crores, and the whole of this money has been spent by the Government on Railways, in addition to large amounts specially borrowed for the purpose." Gokhale pointed out that money was needed for objects vitally affecting the well-being of the people. He asked, "Are Railways every thing and mass education nothing ? Is improved sanitation nothing ?"

He made several suggestions : reduction of the State demand on land, improvement of the soil, removal of agricultural indebtedness, irrigation and scientific agriculture, promotion of industrial and technical education, primary education, and sanitary improvement.

Gokhale, having come to politics from education, was vitally interested in education, especially primary education. The total sum spent by the Government on primary education was Rs. $13\frac{1}{3}$ lakhs in 1901-02, against total receipts of Rs. $30\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs from primary schools throughout India. Gokhale declared that this total neglect of education even at the primary stage was intolerable.

At the conclusion of his speech, Gokhale urged the Government to undertake two things : the improvement of the condition of the people, and the conciliation of the educated classes.

In 1907 Gokhale had the satisfaction of finding that his persistent demand for the reduction of the salt duty to Re. 1 per maund was ultimately conceded. The only thing which he disliked was the ill grace with which this was done. The Finance Member said in his speech that the salt duty was the only contribution made by the poor to the public expenditure. Gokhale pointed out that the assertion was wrong. Land revenue, income from drink, excise duty on cotton goods, stamp and registration duty, forest receipts—all these came from the poor. The only tax which the poor did not pay was the income-tax.

In his budget speech, Gokhale had made the suggestion that the receipts and expenditure on railway account should be separately shown, and not merely the profit. This suggestion was accepted. Gokhale also wanted the irrigation account to be shown separately. This was not done. Gokhale could not approve the idea of utilizing the surpluses for the reduction of debt, or investing them in the construction of Railways. He told the Government that the unproductive debt was so small as not to cause concern. The more important question in that year's budget was the disposal of the profits from the mint. The Government was not definite as to what should be done about it. In 1906 the Finance Member had said that at some time the rupees would have to be converted into sovereigns. Gokhale wanted the Government to make a categorical announcement of its intentions.

In the budget there were certain features which were welcomed by Gokhale. One was the reduction of the Army reorganization expenditure by Rs. 75 lakhs, another was the abolition of the opium traffic and the third was an announcement about free primary education. Reduction of Army expenditure met an old demand of Gokhale's. As for opium receipts, the whole idea of India's producing such a narcotic for consumption in China was repugnant to Gokhale. "I have."

he said, "always felt a sense of deep humiliation at the thought of this revenue, derived as it is practically from the degradation and moral ruin of the people of China." Governments both in England and in India were coming to have qualms of conscience about it. As for primary education, Gokhale succeeded in convincing the Government that more money ought to be spent on it.

The budget estimates of 1908 also showed a surplus, though a smaller one. The salt tax had already been appreciably reduced. But this year there was a feature of the economy which agitated the mind of the Government even to the extent of making it say that a Committee of Inquiry was necessary. Prices were rising, and the Government, in the view of many, was adopting superficial measures to face them. Gokhale surveyed the whole economic situation in the country including the currency policy and the position in regard to exports and imports. He was of the view that the sudden rise in the currency was bound to result in a general rise in prices. He did not accept the contention that additional currency was necessary as trade was expanding. He quoted statistics extensively in support of his position that prices increased as and when the currency in circulation increased. But the harm did not stop there. Exports came down and imports went up. Another effect, to quote him, would be that "whatever gold there is in general circulation will be drained from the country." The cost of production would also go up and indigenous industries could not compete with foreign industries.

The next year, 1909, was a year of important changes. The era of surplus budgets seemed to be coming to a close. It was also the last year of the old Constitution. The Minto-Morley Reforms were to come into force from 1910.

Gokhale thought that it was a year of heavy deficits,

though the Finance Member, Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, had budgeted for a small surplus. The Finance Member's expectations of revenues were uncertain, depending as they did on favourable rains. Gokhale thought that the Finance Member had taken an optimistic view. According to Gokhale the deficit was going to be Rs. $5\frac{1}{2}$ crores, the heaviest till then. Gokhale refuted the charge that the deficit was due to remissions True, the salt duty had been reduced from Rs. 2.8 to Re. 1 per maund, the income-tax level had gone up from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000, and famine cesses in certain areas had been abolished; the total relief by these remissions came to about Rs. 4 million and the view that the deficits were the result of these reliefs was too simple to accept. Gokhale made a more systematic diagnosis of the deficit as well as of the rise in prices. The Government, he said, had stopped the expenditure on the Army reorganization scheme after a period of four years, no doubt; but it had already increased the permanent expenditure by $1\frac{1}{2}$ million sterling. As for prices, they were a function of three variables, currency, demand and supply, and any general rise resulting from the disturbance of the currency might be modified by one or both of the other two factors.

On building up a strong reserve Gokhale said : "We seem to stand in this matter on the horns of a dilemma. If the mints continue to be idle, as at present, and no new rupees are coined, there will be no coinage profits and therefore no addition to the Gold Standard reserve. If new rupees are coined, they will, I fear, tend to raise prices still higher. And this will discourage exports and stimulate imports and will exercise an adverse effect on our balance of trade." Gokhale's suggestion regarding this intricate problem, made with diffidence, was "to stop the coinage of new rupees and coin gold pieces instead."

In his speeches on the budgets Gokhale generally confined

himself to the economic aspects of national life. But in 1909 he referred to political matters as well. Nine Bengali patriots had been deported the previous December under the 1818 Regulation. He asked the Government to set them at liberty. He also referred to the Reform Bill which was in the offing. Its most controversial part was the special representation to be given to Muslims. Gokhale had embodied his views in the matter in the note submitted to the Secretary of State in that connection, and these were "to throw open a substantial minimum of seats to election on a territorial basis, in which all qualified to vote should take part without distinction of race or creed. And then supplementary elections should be held for the minorities which, numerically or otherwise, are important enough to need special representation; these supplementary elections should be confined to the minorities only." The minorities and the number of seats to be assigned to the provinces were to depend on the special circumstances of the provinces. This was the plan that the Indian Government had advocated in their despatch and it was agreeable to Gokhale. He said that the great advantage of the plan was that it provided for united action by all communities up to a certain point and that it prevented injustice in practical operation to minorities by giving them special supplementary electorates of their own. Gokhale admitted that the union of all communities was the goal. But he favoured the idea of supplementary elections in order to remove doubts from the minds of the minorities.

When Gokhale returned from England, where he had gone in connection with the talks regarding the Reforms, he found that Muslim feelings had been aroused against the Reforms by their being represented as a result of "Hindu intrigue" in London. His name was associated with the "intrigue". But Gokhale made a categorical statement that he had merely supported the view of the Government of India and had done nothing more.

What was only a fear in the budget of 1909 became a reality in the succeeding year's budget. The sources of revenue had grown uncertain and expenditure had risen. Gokhale made a rapid survey of the budgetary position in the preceding thirty-year period of the country. The country had surpluses from 1898 to 1907 owing to savings in Home remittances, increase in opium revenue, the expansion of the ordinary revenues of the country, and improvement in railway revenues. The remissions given to the people were negligible. But civil and military expenditure had increased out of all proportion and was causing anxiety. Gokhale advocated retrenchment to cover the deficits. He asserted that unless stringent measures were taken to cut down expenditure the future would be dark. He warned the Government that income from opium was being considerably reduced and that ultimately it would be wiped out.

In 1911, Gokhale was unable to speak in as comprehensive and detailed a manner as was his wont because he was given only twenty minutes for his budget speech. He contented himself by referring to only two questions—the finances of Burma and the financial relations between the provinces and the Imperial Council. The Burma question does not concern us now. Burma was then a province of India, but provinces in those days existed only in name, having no real powers. There was a tussle between the provinces and the Central Government. The Centre had the powers of taxation which the provinces lacked. The Central Government itself was not independent, being at the mercy of the Secretary of State for India. The provinces had certain items of revenue collection allotted to them. Certain items were shared by the Centre and the provinces. As the Centre controlled the main items of revenue, the provinces had to wait for doles from the Centre to meet their expenses. Welfare measures had to be undertaken by the provinces, but the Centre took the lion's share of the revenues

leaving negligible sums of money to the provinces. Gokhale said : ".....instead of receiving the whole income from growing revenues, the Government of India should receive large fixed contributions from the Provincial Governments, say, up to one-third or one-fourth of its revenues, the other two-thirds or three-fourths being derived from growing resources." These resources were customs, excise and stamps. Gokhale opposed very stoutly the policy of doles which, he felt, should stop.

Gokhale laid down certain conditions to be observed before the provinces were given the right of taxation. The conditions were that the practice of discussing the provincial budgets must be well settled, that every local Government should be a Council Government with the Governor coming fresh from England as the head, and that there should be elected majorities in the Provincial Councils. After fulfilling these conditions the power of taxation could be conferred on the Provincial Councils. The powers of borrowing were to follow later.

In 1912, again, Gokhale's speech on the budget was a brief one. He spoke very highly of the services rendered by Sir James Meston and Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson. He spoke feelingly of Calcutta City which was to cease to be the capital of the country yielding place to Delhi. On financial matters, Gokhale had only one suggestion to make, viz., the appointment of a Royal Commission to explore additional sources of revenue as the opium revenue was gradually disappearing.

Here is an extract from his speech : "My Lord, we bid adieu to this City with profound regret, and with every good wish for its continued prosperity that the heart of man can frame. And we fervently trust that, great as has been its past, its future will be even greater."

Gokhale's historic role in the Imperial Legislative Council rightly earned him the title of 'Leader of the Opposition'.

12

In the Cause of Education

GOKHALE'S BUDGET SPEECHES, masterly surveys of Indian economy and polity as they were, are not his only claims as a legislator, to the grateful remembrance of his countrymen. He helped also to mould Indian opinion on important political issues, the question of the public services, the issue of indentured labour, educational progress and co-operative credit.

The political topics on which he spoke related to the Official Secrets Act, the Seditious Meetings Bill and the Press Bill. In 1903 an amendment to the Official Secrets Act of 1889 was moved by Mr. A. T. Arundel. Gokhale opposed it. The 1889 Act had not originated in India. It had been passed in England and was made applicable to the Dominions including India. It related to secrets regarding naval and military affairs and was not much objected to. The proposed amendment extended the scope of the old Act to cover civil matters also. The other obnoxious feature of the Act was that whoever went to a Government office for getting information without securing permission or without lawful authority was to be held guilty under the Act. It was also proposed to make the offence cognizable. Gokhale objected to the passing of the amendment as the word "secret" was nowhere defined and as it would affect seriously any publication of news of even a trivial nature by newspapers. He brought to the notice of the

Government that even the Provincial Governments were opposed to it. He said, "The Press is, in one sense, like the Government, a custodian of public interest, and any attempt to hamper its freedom by repressive legislation is bound to affect these interests prejudicially and cannot fail in the end to react upon the position of the Government itself." This was, in effect, an attempt to curtail the freedom of the press.

In November 1907, the Government submitted the report of the Select Committee for 'better provision for the prevention of meetings likely to promote sedition, or to cause a disturbance of public tranquillity.' The Government had grown panicky because of the happenings in Bengal and other places in the wake of the Partition and was desirous of arming itself with extraordinary powers. Gokhale opposed the Bill. He said that the remedy was not repression but conciliation. The Government was in no mood to listen to his wise words : "The Bill is a dangerous one and the only satisfactory way to improve it is to drop it... It will fail in India as it has failed everywhere else in the world." In his speech, he paid the highest tribute to the Bengalis. "They *will* not be thus put down by force.....The Bengalis are in many respects the most remarkable people in all India." The Government, however, had a majority in the Council and could get the measure passed.

In 1910 and 1911 the Government brought in Bills to prolong the life of the Act. Gokhale repeatedly opposed them. He argued that the situation had changed and that the Reforms would improve it still further; hence the Act need not be pursued. His speeches were full of feeling and were worthy of the patriot that he was but they fell on deaf ears.

The Press Bill was the first Bill under the Reforms. Gokhale regretted its introduction. He did not, however, oppose it. He asked the Government to limit it to a period of

three years. He pointed out that the Penal Code was sufficient to punish sedition and that there were other measures too in the armoury of the Government to put it down. He added, "Our Press has been in the main a potent instrument of progress; it has quickened our national consciousness; it has spread in the country ideas of justice and equality, it has stimulated our public spirit, it has set us higher standards of public duty." This measure, aimed at the Press as it was, was unwanted.

Gokhale did not vote against the Press Bill. Pherozeshah Mehta grew angry with him for not upholding the liberty of the Press. There is an inner story behind Gokhale's action, as given by C. Y. Chintamani and corroborated by S. P. Sinha, which throws light on the incident.

In 1910 during Christmas, Gokhale had gone to Allahabad to attend the Congress session, presided over by Sir William Wedderburn. Chintamani had strongly assailed the Press Bill in his *Leader*, and he enquired of Gokhale why he had not opposed the Bill. Gokhale gave his reasons and C. Y. Chintamani reproduced the conversation from memory in a letter to friends.

S. P. Sinha was then a member of the Governor General's Executive Council, the first Indian to be so included. This was considered at the time a great event and a big step forward. Sinha was given the portfolio of Law, an important portfolio. As the Law Member, various measures came to him for introduction in the Council, whether he liked them or not. The Press Bill was one of the most unpopular Bills with which Sinha's name came to be associated. The Bill, as originally drafted by the Government officials, was so drastic that Sinha could not persuade himself to be a party to it. In spite of his opposition the Governor-General-in-Council decided upon its introduction. Sinha told the

Viceroy, Lord Minto, to cable his resignation to the Secretary of State. Lord Minto was perturbed and asked his Private Secretary to bring about a compromise of such a nature as would enable Sinha to withdraw his resignation. He also told his Private Secretary that the Hon. Mr. Gokhale and Sir Lawrence Jenkins were the only persons who could save the situation; the Secretary should see them and place the papers before them and request them to intervene.

Lord Minto feared that if the first Indian to be appointed to the Executive Council resigned within a year, public opinion in England would receive an unfavourable impression and that he would be held responsible for it. He was therefore bent on altering the Bill in such a way as to save the awkward situation. He informed Lord Morley about the resignation, and said that if the resignation was not withdrawn, it might be fifty years before any Secretary of State could think of appointing another Indian to the Executive Council.

Neither Gokhale nor Sir Lawrence Jenkins agreed to advise Sinha to withdraw his resignation, unless the Bill was modifiend substantially. The Viceroy consented. Gokhale and Sinha thought of amendments. The original Bill was to be made applicable to Indian newspapers alone. The amendment sought to apply it to Anglo-Indian papers as well. The original Bill had provided that security should be demanded from all papers in circulation then. The amendment proposed that no security should be taken from presses and newspapers existing on the day of the passing of the Bill, but that if by their subsequent conduct they rendered themselves liable to the action provided for in the Bill, then security could be demanded from them. The original Bill had shut out all relief. The amendment kept open the doors of High Courts at the final stage in appeal. These were the minimum improvements in the Bill.

The Governor-General was in a mood to accept anything that came out of these deliberations, provided Sinha was prepared to withdraw his resignation. The amendments were considered by the Governor-General-in-Council. The members grew angry, but the Viceroy pressed strongly for the acceptance of the amendments. The members had no choice but to yield and the amended Bill was introduced.

When the Bill was introduced, Sinha imposed a new condition. The condition was that Gokhale should join him in supporting the measure. Gokhale did not agree, saying that he was an elected non-official member and that his position was different from that of a Member of the Executive Council.

Though Sinha could find no objection to the amended clauses of the Bill, yet he felt that he was doing something wrong in accepting the very principle of such a Bill. How could he do so without somebody's moral support ? Gokhale refused to oblige him. Gokhale tried to impress on Sinha that it would be improper for him to think of resigning after so much had been done by the Viceroy. Sinha said thereupon that he would remain neutral. Gokhale told him that no Member of the Executive Council could do so. He must support the Bill and give up the idea of resignation. Sinha would not yield. Gokhale again thought of a way out. Gokhale agreed to refrain from opposing the Bill, or voting against the Bill. He, however, retained perfect liberty to suggest amendments in the Select Committee and the Council. All this satisfied Sinha.

We turn to an important aspect of Gokhale's personality, his faith in education as a means of raising the country. The educationist in him came to the fore when the University Bill was introduced in December 1903. In bringing forward this amending Bill, the Government's view was that the universities

and colleges had become hotbeds of seditious teaching and had to be brought under control completely. There was growing dissatisfaction among the educated classes. Even those who secured high degrees were not getting the same salaries and the same posts as the Europeans brought from abroad. Many qualified persons did not even secure employment. There were also many who had the misfortune not to get through the examinations. Thus discontent was universal among the educated. As a result, some of them nurtured revolutionary ideas and this began to perturb the Government which wanted to bring under its control the universities by stringent measures. The Syndicates and the Senates of the universities, and the colleges, were all to be officialized.

Gokhale opposed the Bill and made six speeches at various stages of its discussion. He raised five objections to the constitutional aspects of the Bill. The Bill meant a clean sweep of the existing Senates and giving them no voice in the nomination of new Senates. Another objection was that the Bill made no provision for elections by professors. Moreover, the size of the Senates was reduced considerably. In addition, the elective seats were few and those by Government nomination were too many. Last of all, the tenure of membership was for a period of five years. Gokhale stated that the effect of the Act would be to dissociate the Indian element from university administration and place it in the hands of European professors, which was exactly what the Government desired.

The Bill was passed in the teeth of strong opposition. The Chancellors of different universites issued the appropriate notifications to implement the Act. The notifications were illegal but the Government brought in a Bill to validate them. Gokhale opposed this new legislation. He deplored the Governmental incursion into the rights and powers of the judiciary. His was a plea for good sense and

propriety; it was fruitless. It grieved Gokhale and people like him that the Government, which they trusted for its liberalism, should resort to retrograde measures for tightening up their hold on the ruled.

On March 18, 1910 Gokhale moved the following resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council : "That this Council recommends that a beginning should be made in the direction of making elementary education free and compulsory throughout the country, and that a mixed Commission of officials and non-officials be appointed at an early date to frame definite proposals " In moving the resolution Gokhale made a powerful speech, impressive for its feeling and its array of facts and arguments. The Government, he declared, should follow in the footsteps of other civilized countries and discharge its duty of making the people literate. He traced the history of elementary education in the leading countries of the world and asked the Government to follow the Japanese example. He cited statistics to bring out the neglect of education in India. In the course of twenty-five years, the proportion of the population going to primary schools had advanced only to 1.9 per cent from 1.2 per cent. Expenditure on primary education from the public funds (provincial, municipal and local) during the period had increased by Rs. 57 lakhs. It was Rs. 93 lakhs in 1910. In the same period land revenue had gone up by Rs 9 crores and military expenditure had jumped up from Rs. 19 crores to Rs. 32 crores.

Gokhale also made several constructive suggestions to improve the state of affairs. He said that the percentage of children attending schools had to be quadrupled. Expenditure incurred on education, too, had to grow fourfold. Gokhale suggested that two thirds of this amount should be borne by the Government and the rest by the local bodies. The Government would have been thus required to spend only an additio-

nal sum of Rs. $2\frac{2}{3}$ crores. Gokhale said that he would be satisfied if this increase was achieved in twenty years.

Other suggestions were that education should be made compulsory for boys between 6 and 10 years; the principle of compulsion was to be applied in areas where 33 percent of the male population was at school; girls were to be exempted on grounds of practical considerations; where compulsion was to be resorted to, education should be free, the extra expenditure to be divided on a two to one basis between the Government and the local bodies; a separate secretary for education should be appointed in the Home Department; and, lastly, progress reports should be published every year. Gokhale also pointed out the sources from which the additional expenditure could be met.

Gokhale withdrew his resolution on the assurance given by the Government that it would carefully examine the question. But as no signs of its having done so were forthcoming, Gokhale introduced another Bill on March 16, 1911, embodying almost the same proposals as in the previous year. He quoted Gladstone in support of his plea for compulsion. Gladstone's words were : "I think that it is a scandal and a shame to the country, that in the midst of our, as we think, advanced civilization, and undoubtedly of our enormous wealth, we should at this time of day be obliged to entertain the principle of compulsion." If England could not do without compulsion, how could India, a backward country ? In India primary education had rested on a voluntary basis for more than half a century, without any perceptible progress. Seven children out of eight were still illiterate, and four villages out of five were without a school.

Gokhale recognized the practical difficulties that the Government would have to face and tried to make compul-

sion as acceptable as possible in the circumstances. His emphasis was on the acceptance of the principle of compulsion by the Government. This was needed for bringing in "a ray of light, a touch of refinement, a glow of hope into lives that sadly need them all", to quote the words of this great man. He ended his speech with the words:

> I do not ask to see the distant scene:
>
> One step enough for me.

Gokhale was not the person to give up his cause, though he faced opposition from the Government, from some of the non-official members even. On March 18, 1912, he reverted to the subject and moved that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee. Gokhale argued out his case with the logic of a lawyer, the academic dignity of a professor, and the passion of a patriot. But his great advocacy fell on closed minds. Gokhale did not think that his duty ended with the introduction and piloting of the Bill in the Council. He formed Elementary Education Leagues in Madras and Allahabad through the Servants of India Society, and carried on an agitation in the country for achieving his purpose.

To turn to another topic : Gokhale moved a resolution on February 27, 1912, in the Imperial Legislative Council recommending the creation of District Advisory Councils. In moving his resolution, Gokhale wanted that a non official advisory committee should be made available to the District Collector for coming to quick decisions. Gokhale wanted the village panchayats to be revived, local and municipal boards to be made popular and larger resources to be made available to them as well. Tilak and Gokhale were agreed on the democratization of these bodies. Nothing concrete emerged from all this but it influenced Governmental thinking.

Gokhale's contribution to Indian public life as a parlia-

mentarian of the front rank lay in his speeches in the Council which were varied and cogent. He spoke on the issues and causes of his own choice; he also availed himself of opportunities afforded by Governmental measures for expressing his views on them. Injustice in Civil Service appointments and examinations was a vital issue for the country, and he did not spare the Government for being partial to outside interests.

Gokhale was the most active member of the Imperial Legislative Council of his day. Many of his colleagues called him the 'Leader of the Opposition,' and rightly so. But he was neither a fanatical opponent nor a blind supporter of the Government. He opposed whatever was bad, and supported whatever was likely to contribute to the progress and welfare of the country. When the Co-operative Credit Societies Bill was brought in by the Government in 1904, Gokhale supported it without any hesitation. Recognition of the inherent limitations of his position enabled him to play the role effectively to the country's satisfaction.

13

The Servants of India Society

WE NOW COME to the most characteristic gift of Gokhale to India, the Servants of India Society. The founding of this brotherhood was the outcome of his conviction that the country needed a selfless and intelligent band of workers to dedicate their lives to the service of the country.

Public service in the modern sense was hardly known in India before the advent of British rule. The Christian missionaries had shown the way by taking to educational work and by founding hospitals. Their activities led to much good work. But people felt that all this was only a cloak for proselytizing, and founded institutions of their own to provide educational and medical facilities. Even so the spirit of service was still to grow. This was particularly true of the field of politics. Indians had yet to take to politics with the requisite knowledge and study of problems. But the need for public work based on an ardent devotion to the uplift of the downtrodden had gradually come to be recognized. The Deccan Education Society and certain other institutions of poona sprang from this zeal. While a beginning had thus been made in what can be termed welfare work, politics and economics still cried out for institutions that would prepare for lifelong service. Something more than conferences and the organizations which brought together individuals was called for.

It was on June 12, 1905, that the foundation-stone of the Servants of India Society was laid in Poona by Shivram Hari Sathe, an old-time colleague of Gokhale in the Sarvajanik Sabha. The first batch of members assembled at sunrise on the low ridge between the Fergusson College and the Society's headquarters and took the vow of service. It was the most auspicious day in Gokhale's life, full of thrill and joy. Gokhale took the vow first and administered it to Natesh Appaji Dravid, Anant Vinayak Patwardhan and G. K. Deodhar. The seven vows which a member had to take were : that the country would be always first in his thoughts and that he would give to her service the best that was in him, that in serving the country he would seek no personal advantage to himself, that he would regard all Indians as brothers and would work for the advancement of all without distinction of caste or creed, that he would be content with such provision for himself and his family, if he had any, as the Society would be able to make and that he would devote no part of his energies to earning money for himself, that he would lead a pure personal life, that he would engage in no personal quarrel with any one, and, lastly, that he would always keep in view the aims of the Society and watch over its interests with the utmost zeal, doing all he could to further its work and that he would never do anything inconsistent with the objects of the Society.

In starting the Society Gokhale had in view 'the great work of rearing the superstructure' on the foundations laid, after 'the jungle has been cleared'. In the preamble to the Constitution of the Society the British connection was accepted as a divine dispensation for India's good. The Constitution laid emphasis on character, and capacity-building. It laid down : "Public life must be spiritualized. Love of the country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a daunt-

less heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence which nothing can shake—equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending oneself in the service of one's country".

These are high ideals. Gokhale was a person of a spiritual mould and he wanted his Society to be of similar mould. It is worthy of note that Gandhiji also started *ashrams*, with objects similar to those of the Servants of India Society and himself sought entry into the Society. Gandhiji was fond of quoting Gokhale's maxim about spiritualizing politics and he treasured it as a guide to his daily action.

Gokhale sent the Constitution and the rules to some eminent persons like Pherozeshah Mehta and Principal Selby. Principal of a sister college in Poona, Selby was also the president of the governing body of the Fergusson College and had great admiration for Gokhale. He informed Gokhale that the document was unwisely marked as 'secret' and that the first condition of admission 'reads to an Englishman rather like a rule of a Russian secret society'. Gokhale changed the rule as it was capable of misinterpretation Mehta's objection was different. He told Gokhale that he was creating 'a superior caste' in starting the Society.

Arguments and objections apart, the starting of the Servants of India Society was a great event in contemporary Indian history. It bore testimony to the fact that Gokhale was a constructive thinker. Even if all his speeches, writings and political work were to be forgotten, the one thing that would abide in the history of the nation is the Society which he founded for the service of the people, a Society worthy of greater emulation than has been the case.

The Servants of India Society was meant to be a sort of

post-graduate institution where members under training had to study hard the issues of the day, come into contact with the people, succour the afflicted, and fight against foreign rule in a constitutional way. If they enjoyed high positions and earned large salaries, the salaries were to be surrendered to the Society, keeping for themselves the minimum prescribed under the rules of the Society.

With these ideals animating it, it is not surprising that the Society has rendered great services to the country since its foundation nearly sixty years ago. Its members have been pioneers in the service of Adivasis and in the trade union movement. They have contributed greatly to the amelioration of Indians, especially labourers, abroad. Their record of succour to sufferers from floods, famine, epidemics and earthquakes is shining. They have done splendid work in opening avenues of education to women, they have striven for the uplift of "the depressed classes", started cooperative societies and rendered innumerable other acts of service as well. Leading personalities of the Society like Srinivasa Sastri, Thakkar Bapa, N.M. Joshi, G. K. Deodhar, S. G. Vaze, H.N. Kunzru, Kodanda Rao, K G. Limaye, Bakhale and A.D. Mani are men of whom any country can be proud.

The Society has branches at Bombay, Nagpur, Madras and Allahabad apart from the central office at Poona. The spacious building that houses the central office is now the Gokhale School of Politics and Economics, one of the major centres in the country's intellectual life.

Gokhale was not hampered by lack of funds. He had already made for himself a name in the Supreme Legislative Council and as a public man of irreproachable integrity. He could, therefore, secure whatever money he needed. Some rich men gave him blank cheques for the Society. But Gokhale was not the person to take undue advantage of

philanthropy. He was to prove that good work never did suffer for lack of funds.

In this connection we may mention that in 1905 Gokhale was also engaged in the collection of funds for erecting a memorial to Ranade. About a lakh of rupees was collected for the purpose. It was Gokhale's desire that a Ranade Economic Institute should be started for economic studies and for industrial research. The worthy ambition was to become a reality. The Institute was inaugurated in 1910 and it was taken over by Poona University later.

The founding of the Servants of India Society was very well received by the public in general, and by eminent men in particular. Some of the officials, however, were doubtful about its future. Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, the Finance Member at the time, wrote from Simla on September 2, 1910.*

"On the 19th I passed several hours with Mr. Gokhale and the members of the 'Servants of India Society.' The 'College' buildings are of a superior character; the library is of the very first class, and all the arrangements appear to have been well thought out from every stand-point, including sanitation ..... All the men I saw, who seemed to be between twenty and thirty years of age, impressed me most favourably..... ..... I had long conversations with them..... ...I also had a long conversation with Mr. Gokhale, but neither from the members of the Society, nor from Mr Gokhale himself, was I able to receive a clear definition of what the ulterior object of the Society really is.... the whole plan seems to be visionary, and I suspect that in the end we shall find these men seeking either Government or municipal employment as a means of livelihood. They are highly educated and will no

* *Letters to Nobody, pp. 75-76.*

doubt make useful public servants, unless their age, which is somewhat advanced, stands in the way."

Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, like Lord Curzon, could not understand the Indian mind. Hence the ill considered remark. Gokhale was no visionary but was an eminently practical idealist. Without ideals a nation perishes. And in Gokhale India had a son who not only aimed high but had the ability to translate ideals into achievement.

Gokhale spoke very little about religion but he was no agnostic. He did not like his Society to be called secular. He likened it to the religious orders of medieval Christianity. Gokhale's religion was primarily ethical and personal, not doctrinaire and institutionalized. It is noteworthy that in 1902 Gokhale wrote a letter to K. Natarajan of *The Indian Social Reformer* in which he said that he was attracted by the aims and aspirations of Swami Vivekananda. Gokhale told him in later years that 'he had reached a faith in God as Love'.

14

From Secretaryship to the Presidentship of the Congress

After the apology incident, Gokhale had a lean time in the Congress. He was not allowed to sit on the dais among the celebrities at the Amraoti session in 1897, or called upon to move or speak on any resolution. He, for his part, was determined not to impose himself on that body if he was not wanted. By his patience and steadfastness he out-faced this situation and in 1904, was elected the Secretary of the Congress; his subsequent rise was steady and smooth.

Probably this change in the attitude of the Congress hierarchy can be traced to the storm of the Bengal Partition. Gokhale had access to the Government in India and England alike, and the leaders of the Congress thought that his commanding position could be helpful—though not in averting the wrong, at least in minimizing it. Another consideration must have been the need to maintain unity in the Moderate ranks.

At the annual session of the Congress held in Bombay towards the end of 1904, Sir William Wedderburn moved a resolution that representatives from all provinces of India should be sent to England, where a general election was due in the coming year, to educate public opinion there. The resolu-

tion was seconded by Tilak. Gokhale and Lala Lajpatrai were the only two leaders who undertook the tour. Gokhale left India on September 16, 1905, a few months after the Servants of India Society had been founded and only a few days after Lord Curzon had put through his idea to split Bengal. He stayed in England for fifty days. Lajpatrai had gone there earlier. The two had abilities that complemented each other's. As a powerful orator, Lajpatrai addressed mass meetings, while Gokhale addressed meetings of Parliamentarians, Liberals and selected sections of the people. Gokhale had a taxing time of it, as during those fifty days he had to address forty-five meetings, and work nearly eighteen hours a day. The strain was so great that he had to undergo an operation of the throat on board the steamer on the return journey.

How far his speeches on the occasion were able to influence the vote may be debatable, but not so the fact that India's case was presented powerfully. This was a consolation to him. There were also particular points to be made clear. For instance, the Congress was thinking of boycotting British textiles. Gokhale wanted this to be understood not only by the general public but also by the workers of Manchester and Lancashire. He told the workers at Manchester that they had every right to be angry not with India, which was wronged, but with those who had committed the wrong of partitioning Bengal. The Indian people, grown desperate, could not retaliate in any other way than by refusing to buy British goods. His speeches were well attended and well received. At this distance of time, we cannot but admire Wedderburn and others for their splendid idea of 'educating the British electorate'.

Besides seeing to it that India's case did not go by default, Gokhale had the satisfaction of materially helping the journal *India* published by the Congress in England. The journal

had always run at a loss, but Gokhale was able to enrol a large number of new subscribers for it.

Gokhale returned to India on December 5, 1905. Strangely enough no reception was accorded to him in Bombay on behalf of the Presidency Association for his services in England. Pherozeshah Mehta, the President of the Association and his colleague and friend, did not receive him. What could have been the reason ? Some of the events of those days go to show that Mehta was not after all happy with Gokhale. He did not like the idea of the starting of the Servants of India Society; was it for this sin that Gokhale was treated in this fashion ? Mehta also did not attend the session of the Benares Congress in 1905 in spite of the request of Gokhale who presided over the session.

But another leader, one who belonged to a different camp, made good this omission : Tilak gave Gokhale a cordial welcome. A public meeting was held at Poona at which Tilak himself moved a resolution congratulating Gokhale on his eminent Services to the country in England. Tilak and Gokhale, who had not seen eye to eye on several occasions, were brought together by the Bengal Partition. Tilak even distributed a portrait in colour of Gokhale through his papers *Kesari* and *Mahratta* to the readers. Tilak showed that there could be magnanimity in public life.

A higher honour was in store for Gokhale. Even when he was about to leave for England in September 1905, he had been informed that he was the President-designate of the next Congress session. He requested the Reception Committee to excuse him on the ground that he was too young, being hardly forty, to accept the honour. But the Congress leaders knew what they were doing. They wanted a person of his ability to captain the ship when foul winds were blowing. Gokhale, moreover, had great qualities to recommend him, a balanced

mind, a sweet temper and an outstanding record of service to the country. No better person could have been chosen.

Gokhale had a difficult task before him. The Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon had awakened the slumbering nationalism in India. Bengal, in particular, was aroused by the clarion call given by the leaders of the country. The historic struggle that followed is well known. Lord Curzon was provoked by the militant spirit shown by Bengal against British rule. He wanted to split the growing nationalist forces. The Muslim element was to be separated from the unified front. In Eastern Bengal the Muslims were in the majority. Here was an opportunity to divide and rule. And Lord Curzon was a master strategist. The ostensible reason for dividing Bengal was its unwieldy size for administrative purposes. But the partition was actually a political gambit.

There was a tremendous upheaval in Bengal. About five hundred meetings were held protesting against the Partition move. A memorandum signed by 60,000 persons was sent to England to get the proposal dropped. Lord Curzon, coming in conflict with Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of India at the time, decided to resign; before relinquishing office he wanted to complete the work of partition. In the Simla session of the Imperial Legislative Council, which could be attended by officials only, Curzon had the Bill passed in August 1905, and this was to come into force from October next. The indignation of the public knew no bounds. The day of its coming into force was observed as a day of mourning throughout Bengal.

It was in this atmosphere that the Benares session of the Congress was held. Delegates flocked to it from all over the country in large numbers. How would Gokhale lead the people through the crisis? Gokhale's Presidential address was forceful and informative. Welcoming the Prince and

Princess of Wales to India as also the new Viceroy, Lord Minto, Gokhale made a survey of the regime of Lord Curzon. He compared his rule to the rule of Aurangzeb ! Both regimes were excessively centralized and intensely personal. Lord Curzon was great in many ways; but he could not understand the people of India as he did not possess a sympathetic imagination. He did not believe in "the principle of liberty as a factor of human progress," as Gladstone used to put it. He made tremendous efforts to strengthen British rule in India and treated Indians as dumb, driven cattle. Gokhale said that if people were to be humiliated and were to be rendered helpless, then all he could say was, "Good-bye to all hope of co-operating in any way with the bureaucracy in the interests of the people." Prophetic words these—to be made true by Mahatma Gandhi when he launched the non-co-operation movement.

Gokhale dealt with the Swadeshi and boycott movements. Boycott, according to him, was a political weapon which should be reserved for extreme occasions. It was useful in drawing the attention of the ruling class to the grievances of the ruled. He admitted that it was a legitimate weapon. Before using it there ought to be a recogniton of common danger all round, and all personal differences must be sunk. "The devotion to motherland which is enshrined in the highest Swadeshi", he said, "is an influence so profound and so passionate that the very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself." Outlining ideas for converting this Swadeshi objective into practice, he emphasized the importance of reviving and modernizing the handloom industry to yield a supplementary income to the agriculturists. Turning to the political field, Gokhale set out the aims and aspirations of India. The bureaucracy came in for severe criticism at his hands. He ended his speech with a quotation from Ranade which laid great stress on the moral side of life.

Renovate, purify and perfect the whole man by liberating his intellect, elevating his standard of duty and developing to the full all his powers. Those were the words of Ranade. Gokhale ended his speech with another quotation :

> Our times are in his hand
> Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half, trust God; see all, nor be afraid.'

Apart from the Presidential address, there were the resolutions to be considered. Bengal had sent a contingent of firebrands, seething and simmering with the great insult heaped upon them. They wanted the Congress to pass a resolution boycotting the visit of the Prince of Wales. They also wanted another resolution to be passed boycotting British goods. The leaders were divided. Surendranath Banerjea was against both the resolutions. Tilak did not much favour the boycott of the Prince's visit; but he insisted on the resolution on the boycott of British goods. The Congress had already extended an invitation to the Prince of Wales to attend the session, which had not been accepted. The Congress was in a fix, more so the President. Gokhale used all his tact and skill in steering clear of this predicament. He approached Romesh Chunder Dutt and asked him to persuade Surendranath Banerjea to agree to the resolution on the boycott of British goods. Banerjea agreed. Then Tilak and Lala Lajpatrai had to be convinced. Their amendments were defeated in the Subjects Committee but they had given notice of their desire to move them in the open session. Gokhale made a personal appeal to Lajpatrai and persuaded him not to press the resolution boycotting the Prince's visit as it was not a handsome thing to do. Lajpatrai was won over and there remained Tilak. Gokhale requested Lajpatrai to manage Tilak as he was the only person capable of doing so. There was another difficulty. How about the young men of Bengal ?

Gokhale pleaded that if both Tilak and Lajpatrai joined hands they could manage Bengal's youth as well. Lajpatrai suggested to Tilak that they should absent themselves from the session when the boycott resolutions came up, as otherwise it would go against their conscience. The other part of the understanding between him and Gokhale was that the President should declare the resolution passed by a majority and not unanimously. Tilak accepted the suggestion.

It now only remained to manage the Bengal contingent. Lajpatrai and Tilak approached them, but they would not yield. It was then settled that Lajpatrai should keep them engaged in arguments and that the session should proceed with the resolution. The strategy was successful, having been master-minded by Gokhale, Tilak, Surendranath Banerjea, Lajpatrai and Romesh Chunder Dutt. As for the other resolution, the boycott of British goods, it did not figure directly, but was adopted indirectly. The demand for the annulment of the Partition was one part of it, and in the second part the boycott movement undertaken by Bengal was approved.

Thus ended the session. But though there was apparent rapprochement, the delegates must have departed with no easy minds for they had wanted direct action in the form of boycott of British goods. The Surat Congress in 1907 was to reap the harvest of crisis, the seeds of which were sown at the Benares session.

15

Calcutta and Surat

DURING THE FIFTY days that Gokhale spent in England pleading India's cause, things at home took an undesirable turn. Terrorism reared its head much to the dismay of the elder generation of leaders whose hope it was that Britain would some day treat Indians as it treated its own people. They regarded any step that would estrange the feelings and relations between the two countries as suicidal to the interests of India. But Lord Curzon, by his arrogance, had given sustenance to the terrorists who would stop at nothing to end foreign rule over the country. The situation was in favour of extremists, and the moderates were forced to be on the defensive.

Where did Gokhale himself stand? Among the moderates he was an extremist, as he had upheld the principle of boycott; the extremists, however, did not claim him as their own, and, to be frank, he had no desire to be so claimed. He was in essence a realist.

The Calcutta Congress of 1906 was approaching and the extremist group did not want to lose what they had already gained at Benares. They thought that Lala Lajpatrai was the proper choice for the Presidentship. The youthful element in the country welcomed the choice. But the old guard was not for him for that very reason. Tilak, an extre-

mist himself, hailed the militant spirit that was abroad. Maharashtra backed Bengal in fostering the spirit of ardent nationalism. Tilak's active support made Bengal and Maharashtra come together very close. The glories of Bengal were widely sung in Maharashtra and the inspiring history of Maratha rule and its hero, Shivaji came to enthral and inspire Bengal. Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal were adored in Maharashtra; so was Tilak in Bengal.

Lala Lajpatrai's election was not favoured by Surendranath Banerjea and Pherozeshah Mehta. They feared that he would create a situation in which their labours in winning over British public opinion, as also the efforts of the well-wishers of India in the British Government, would both be wasted. Lala Lajpatrai's name was dropped.

The Reception Committee which was authorized to make the selection was controlled by Banerjea and not by Bipin Chandra Pal. It is astonishing that Bengal, stirred to the depths at that time, could not get a non-moderate elected as the President of the Calcutta Congress. Tilak's name was suggested by Bipin Chandra Pal, but, it, too, was turned down. The moderates, for their part, were not sure that their nominee would get elected. They sent an SOS to Dadabhai Naoroji to come to the rescue of the Congress. Gokhale was then in London; Dadabhai showed him the cable. The Grand Old Man of India decided to run to the succour of the Congress. B. C. Pal, who had seen through the clever game of his opponents, sent a cable to Dadabhai not to accept the onerous task and threatened him with unpleasant consequences in case he accepted the Presidentship. When the veteran refused to be deterred, the controversy was set at rest and both the parties welcomed the choice.

Though the first hurdle was thus cleared, the battle was not won. Pherozeshah Mehta did not like even a reference to

boycott to figure in the annals of the Congress. But he was to be thoroughly disappointed. Dadabhai, instead of quenching the fire, came with a can of kerosene, as a newspaper put it at the time. Dr Rash Behari Ghose, the eminent jurist of Calcutta, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. In his opening speech he condemned all the actions of the Government in Bengal. About Swadeshi he said, "To speak of such a movement as disloyal is a lie and a calumny. We love England with all her faults; but we love India more. If this is disloyalty, we are, I am proud to say, disloyal."

The President made the occasion a memorable one. For the first time in the history of India he declared Swaraj to be the goal of India. The exact words were : "The whole matter can be comprised in one word, self-government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the colonies. A beginning should be made at once which should automatically develop into full self-government. Not only has the time arrived, but it had arrived long past."

Dadabhai did not refer to boycott in his speech, though he fully supported Swadeshi even at a sacrifice. His faith in British statesmen and their statesmanship was vanishing and he was happy that the new spirit of nationalism was abroad throughout the country. The Calcutta Congress could not but pass a resolution which included boycott as one of the means for achieving its goal. A controversy arose as to whether the boycott of British goods should be restricted to Bengal or whether it should be an all-India issue. Gokhale and Malaviya held the former view. Bipin Chandra Pal went to the other extreme and wanted that not only British goods, but also Government institutions throughout India should be boycotted. Gokhale opposed this interpretation. It is interesting to note in retrospect that what Gandhiji advocated and practised during the non-co-operation days had its origins in those early days.

The resolutions on boycott in the 1905 and 1906 sessions of the Congress were not direct. In the 1905 resolution the Congress protested against the Partition and added a clause which in effect stated that the people had been compelled to resort to the boycott of foreign goods as a protest and as perhaps the only constitutional and effective means left to them of drawing the attention of the British public to the action of the Government of India in persisting in their determination to partition Bengal. It is clear from all this that the Congress simply expressed an opinion and left the question at that.

In the 1906 Congress session it resolved as under: "..... this Congress is of opinion that the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the Partition of that Province was, and is, legitimate." This session also did not indicate as to what the people should do. At Surat in 1907, after the split, even the mention of boycott was dropped.

The Calcutta Congress passed four important resolutions: on self-government, boycott, Swadeshi, and national education. Indeed, they were not resolutions but expressions of opinion. As for Swadeshi how far did they go? The mill-owners in the country instead of co-operating with the Congress, tried to raise the prices of their goods and made huge profits.

The much-debated boycott did not succeed in making the British interests feel its effect to any large extent. In some of the big cities there were occasional bonfires of British clothes indicating the prevailing anger against the rulers. Some Congressmen took a vow to use Swadeshi goods. As for national schools, these could be counted on one's fingers. Even the advocates of national education did not send their sons to these schools. One result of the resolutions cannot

be denied : the national spirit was spreading in the country and opposition to Government was growing.

Gokhale and others of the moderate school thought that an open engagement with the Government was difficult in the unprepared condition of the people. Their belief in the goodwill and liberality of the British Government had not wholly vanished.

The stage was now set for the Surat Congress. The battle was to be fought among the leaders themselves, before they engaged the Government in battle. The Government was not idle; it was intensifying repression. Lord Minto was the man on the spot and he let loose the forces of repression on an unprecedented scale.

Bengal had already got out of control and the Punjab came next. The Governor of the Punjab sent despatches to Morley in which he drew such a picture of the state of affairs there that anybody would have drawn the conclusion that mutiny had either broken out in the Punjab or was about to do so. There was something happening in the Punjab, no doubt, but that something was not so alarming. As a result of all this ado, Lala Lajpatrai and Sardar Ajit Singh were arrested and deported to Mandalay on May 9, 1907. The situation in India had already grown critical and the deportations made it worse.

Gokhale was on a tour in northern India to explain the resolutions passed by the Congress, and to counter the explanations of the extremist group. His speeches were very much appreciated. Gokhale was then the Secretary of the Congress and had heavy work to do. The Congress organization had to be kept intact. The Government was to be persuaded to go forward speedily with the Reforms Public

indignation caused by the Government's repression had to be faced. His own health had to be looked after. He and Mehta had to bear the brunt of keeping the Congress along the beaten path. The task was extremely difficult. True, he had not completely identified himself with Mehta but he had to be with him and support him.

The Calcutta Congress session had upset Mehta. He told Tilak that he would undo what had been done at Calcutta. The step contemplated by Mehta was a retrograde one and a leader like Tilak would not allow it to take place. At Calcutta an invitation was extended to the Congress authorities to hold the next session at Lahore. The Punjab was not the proper place for Mehta to achieve his object as it was already astir with the new spirit. Therefore he had the venue changed from Lahore to Nagpur. He then discovered that the nationalist party at Nagpur would not allow the moderates there to proceed smoothly with the arrangements for the session. They wanted Tilak to be the President of the session, which was most unwelcome to the moderates. On November 10, 1907, Mehta called a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at his residence in Bombay. Prominent among those present were Gokhale, Wacha, Mehta, M. A. Jinnah, Tilak, Ambalal Sakharlal and C. Vijayaraghavacharya. The number of those present in all was only 13. Dr Moonje and Alekar, who belonged to Nagpur and who were sitting in the verandah for giving any information that might be required, were turned out by a *chaprasi*. The suggestions made by the nationalist group of Nagpur were not acceptable, too. Mehta and Gokhale were now determined that the session should not be held at Nagpur. A deputation, with a proposal that the venue of the session be changed from Nagpur to Surat, was kept waiting outside. The suggestion was readily accepted, as it came from Mehta himself. The next thorny question was

about the President. Mehta and his group had the name of Dr Rash Behari Ghose before them. He had a lucrative legal practice and had donated a large sum of money for starting national educational institutions in Bengal. A new-comer, he was not a man of the masses. But those were the days when one could not be a leader if he was not a lawyer. Dr Rash Behari Ghose had already been elected President of the session by the Reception Committee at Nagpur. But after the change in the venue, his fresh election by the Reception Committee of Surat became necessary. Unluckily for the moderates, Lala Lajpatrai was released at that time from detention. From all over India telegrams came pouring in to elect him as President. A contingent under the leadership of Gokhale was sent immediately to Surat to persuade the Reception Committee to vote in favour of Dr Ghose, Gokhale argued that they would be putting Lajpatrai in an awkward position as he would have to criticize the Government for putting him in jail, how could he, from the chair, refer to his own imprisonment ? Any other President would have no such limitations. Gokhale's arguments did not satisfy the young men, but the Congress machinery was manned by the moderates and they did not allow Lajpatrai's name even to come up before the meeting. The name of Dr Ghose being the only one on the papers, he was declared elected. There was great resentment in the country over the choice. It was a challenge to the new leadership. Dr Ghose was requested to stand aside but to no purpose.

Though Dr Ghose had been elected President by the Reception Committee, yet his name had to be formally moved in the open session for acceptance. Apart from the change in the venue and election of the President, the moderates held Provincial Conferences in some parts of the country in which the resolutions passed at Calcutta were either dropped or negatived. This infuriated the nationalist

party. The nationalist party was bent upon seeing that the hands of tne clock were not put back.

But the most important question was the drafting of the resolutions for the consideration of the session. Gokhale was entrusted with the work at short notice; he had no clear instructions as to the nature of the resolutions. If the resolutions had been similar in content to the resolutions of the previous session of the Congress, much trouble might have been saved.

Surat became the arena for a show-down between the two groups in the Congress. Contingents of the contending groups flocked there. Aurobindo Ghose and Tilak undertook speaking tours in different parts of Surat as also did the opponents. The atmosphere of Surat grew tense with threats, fear and suspicion.

The day of the session dawned. The *pandal* was filled to capacity and large crowds had gathered outside. Attempts to bring about a compromise had failed. The leaders arrived one by one. They were acclaimed or hooted, none passing without notice. There was an ominous calm at the beginning. The speech of the chairman of the Reception Committee was allowed to be read out. Soon after, the calm gave way. Surendranath Banerjea, the veteran moderate, rose to move the name of Dr Ghose for the Presidentship. As soon as he got up there were shouts and counter-shouts. His voice, loud and powerful, was drowned in the uproar. For ten minutes there was disturbance in the *pandal*. Trouble was anticipated. Gokhale and Mehta seemed to be much worried. The chairman declared the session adjourned to allow mediators time for negotiations. Both the parties were keen on avoiding ugly scenes but were not prepared to compromise on vital points. The whole night attempts were

made by the nationalist group to win over the moderates to their side, or to evolve a formula acceptable to both. They were slighted; thus ended all hope of conducting the session in an orderly manner.

Next day the session began on a note of deceptive smoothness. Surendranath Banerjea was not heckled and he completed his unfinished speech of the previous day. He proposed the name of Dr Ghose and this was seconded by Pandit Motilal Nehru. It was put to vote. Suddenly commotion broke out in the *pandal*. Some shouts were in favour, others against it. The chairman hastily declared Dr Ghose elected,whereupon Dr Ghose occupied the Presidential seat.

Tilak had already sent a note that he wanted to move an adjournment with a constructive proposal when the name of the President was proposed and seconded. As soon as Tilak mounted the dais with resolute steps, chaos set in. Chairs and shoes were thrown about. Tilak stood his ground. Gokhale, fearing that Tilak would be assaulted, stood beside him with outstretched hands to protect him. The police arrived on the scene and cleared the *pandal*. Both sides began charging each other with the responsibility for the unfortunate incidents. But neither the moderates nor the nationalists were blameless. Both the parties wanted to measure their strength and the session itself ended ingloriously within a few minutes.

Gokhale acquitted himself throughout these deplorable proceedings in the most handsome manner. He was dejected over the turn that Congress history was taking and did not know how to get over it. He bore no feelings of personal animosity towards Tilak, and Tilak knew it. At the most Gokhale could be said to have been ineffective.

The newspapers published the Presidential address though it had not been actually delivered in the circumstances then

prevailing. It contained many objectionable words about the nationalists. One of the conditions for the proposed compromise had been the deletion of these references. Since no agreement was reached, no deletion took place.

The whole thing could have been averted if the draft resolutions had been in the hands of the delegates before the opening of the session. The President, after all, was of secondary importance. He was changed every year but not so the resolutions which were meant to express the thoughts of the people and to guide the nation.

Gokhale issued a long statement after the Surat split in his capacity as a General Secretary of the Congress. He explained the reasons for shifting the venue of the Congress from Nagpur to Surat. As regards the rejection of Lajpatrai's nomination, the statement said that Lajpatrai had very few supporters in the Reception Committee and it would have been insulting to the patriotic services rendered by him if he had been defeated. Gokhale also elaborately narrated the history of draft resolutions. It was not for the Congress office to draft resolutions. The Reception Committee was responsible for them in those days. Since its Secretaries could not draft them, Gokhale was asked to do so. On December 15 Gokhale got the papers. He had settled what the subjects were to be, but had not been able to prepare the text up to December 24. Gokhale pointed out that in the Calcutta session the resolutions had not been ready up to the last moment, and that no one had lodged any complaint about the delay. Why should there be complaints in Surat? He added that the resolutions drafted by the Reception Committee were not mandatory. They could be altered, amended or dropped. He blamed Tilak for unnecessarily creating a fuss. Tilak, according to him, wanted to defame the Congress as it was controlled by them, and as he could not wrench control from their hands.

Regarding the resolutions themselves, Gokhale said that he had informed Tilak that the resolutions passed at Calcutta formed the basis of the resolutions drafted for the Surat session. He stated that a copy of the printed resolutions was shown to Tilak on December 24. The main resolution which was controversial was about Swaraj. He added that some of the words objected to by Tilak were altered. Regarding Swadeshi the words "even at a sacrifice" were omitted. But that was a clerical mistake and was immediately corrected. As for boycott, Gokhale said, he had limited it to textile goods alone. But the term had been already widely interpreted and had included the boycott of Government institutions and administration. In order to do away with these wider fanciful interpretations, he had to restrict boycott to a particular item. Gokhale also accused Tilak of having been determined to break up the Congress session even from the very beginning.

Tilak, for his part, gave a lengthy version of the events as he saw them and defended his own actions.

Whoever was to blame for the unseemly occurrences, the upshot was that the unity in the Congress was disrupted and the organization entered a period of comparative ineffectiveness. Two divergent schools of opinion could not meet in one body—this was the significance of the Surat split.

After the *debacle*, the moderates and nationalists held separate meetings at Surat the same day, December 28. The moderates kept ready a pledge which had to be signed by everyone taking part in the meeting which was called a Convention. The nationalists and the moderates had already issued their manifestos on December 27. The manifesto issued by the moderates did not mention Swadeshi, boycott or national education. It was signed by Rash Behari Ghose, Mehta, Gokhale, Banerjea, Wacha and others. The other manifesto

made special mention of the subjects dropped by the moderates. It was signed by Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose and others. Lajpatrai's signature did not figure on either manifesto. Swaraj was common to both the manifestos: but it was qualified by certain duties and responsibilities in the manifesto of the moderates.

The Convention and the nationalists' meeting could do little except indulge in mutual recrimination. On a common platform, both sides were speaking with restraint; now that restraint had gone each group expressed its views freely. If at all anybody was gladdened by this rupture it was the Government. It derived strength from the weakness of the Congress. Morley wrote a letter to Minto on the turn of events in which there was the following estimate of Gokhale :

> "I have often thought during the last twelve months that Gokhale as a party-manager is a baby. A party manager, or for that matter any politician aspiring to be a leader, should never whine. Gokhale is always whining."

It is a judgment which shows ignorance of the nature and sources of Gokhale's strength.

Let us not sit in judgment over the Surat incident. The moderates did not grow strong in spite of the fact that they controlled the Congress. The nationalists could not grow in strength because of the high-handed policy adopted by the Government towards them. The moderates persevered in their efforts of requesting the Government to part with power to some extent. The nationalists realized that strength did not lie in exposing the weaknesses of others but in building up one's own organization. And the Surat fiasco showed that the moderates could not get the backing of the people as

they were intent on not doing what the people generally liked.

Tilak should have had no cause to be angry with Gokhale. He knew that Gokhale had to do some things against his will. When a person is wedded to a particular group, he is required to observe its discipline. All that one can say about Gokhale was that he was not sufficiently assertive. Gokhale wanted that the strength of the parties should be pooled to extract the maximum benefit to the country from the Government. The split at Surat upset his plans; he felt that the Government under one pretext or another would whittle down even what they would otherwise have offered.

Thus 1907 and the succeeding years were eventful in India's history. Gokhale thought it necessary to go to England and persuade Morley in his sweet reasonable way to go forward with the scheme of reforms in spite of all that had happened and was happening in India.

16

The Story of the Morley-Minto Reforms

GOKHALE, LIKE GANDHIJI, believed in persuasive methods for bringing about a change of heart, but, unlike Gandhiji he did not resort to direct action. The lot of such a leader is not enviable.

Gokhale could have risen to any high post in the Government if he had been partial to its doings. The C.I E. title was accepted by him presumably for the purpose of showing that he was not an inveterate opponent of the Government and for creating an atmosphere in which he could get a hearing. The Congress accorded him the highest honour that it could give by electihg him the President of one of its annual sessions. The Government could not do without him as he was "sober and sane". Gokhale was by conviction a moderate and a liberal. Nothing could make him swerve from the position he had taken up. Some in the Congress wanted him to be an extremist like themselves. The Government, on the contrary, wanted him to bear with them patiently and steadily. He would oblige neither group. His consolation lay in being true to himself and to the cause which he so sincerely advocated. He knew that there were two forces at work in the country: unwillingness on the part of

the Government to move with the times and impatience on the part of the extremists.

To go back a little for the Surat split : the Conservatives had been defeated at the polls and the Liberals were at the helm in Britain. The political philosopher, Morley, had become the Secretary of State for India and Minto the Viceroy. It was a good sign for advancing the cause of India – so thought the liberals in this country. Gokhale left India for the third time for England on April 14, 1906. The wrong done to Bengal had to be redressed and political reforms had to be advocated powerfully. He sought interviews with the Under Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for India. He also spoke at several public meetings. In a speech at Liverpool, he placed before his audience the appalling facts that two crores of people had died of hunger in ten years, that six to seven crores did not know what a square meal was and that the death rate was increasing. He brought out also the incalculable harm that Lord Curzon's regime had done to India.

Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the head of the East Bengal Government, was out-Heroding Herod in executing his authority. He imposed restrictions on processions, and subjected students and teachers to police surveillance. Those steps irritated the people. Surendranath Banerjea was arrested while proceeding to the Barisal Provincial Conference, along with the President- elect and delegates, on the plea that he was going in a procession where cries of 'Bande Mataram' were raised. He was fined Rs. 200 and was further fined for arguing that he was insultingly treated. This happened in April 1906. Gokhale took up the matter seriously.

A reign of terror had started in Bengal. No one could raise the cry 'Bande Mataram' without being either arrested

or mercilessly beaten by the police. Fuller's regime played havoc with students of tender age. Gokhale demanded that an inquiry should be held to ascertain whether the reports appearing in newspapers were correct; if they were correct, the officials should be punished for their high-handedness. Morley and the Viceroy, Lord Minto, saw the reasonableness of Gokhale's stand. Fuller was asked to explain some of his acts. In Sirajgunj High School, some of the boys were criminally proceeded against, obviously for shouting 'Bande Mataram' or similar innocuous things. Fuller asked the Calcutta University authorities to disaffiliate that school as also certain other schools. The Government of India had to intervene but Fuller was not in the mood to listen. He wrote in reply to the Government that the University must carry out his orders and that if it did not do so he would resign This threat was welcomed and his resignation accepted. Fuller had not expected that the Government would throw him overboard. Morley noted in his *Recollections* that Fuller was fitted for ordinary work in the Government, "but, I fear, no more fitted to manage the state of things in East Bengal than am I to drive an engine." Fuller's colleagues took a lesson from this episode and did not ride roughshod over the feelings of the people in Bengal. We may attribute this change to Gokhale's powerful intercession

Gokhale had other tasks in England : to undo the Partition of Bengal and to prevent the recurrence of such wrongs. He also tried hard to impress on Morley that unless power was transferred in a large measure to Indians there would be discontent. Gokhale had a number of interviews with Morley. The interviews, wrote Gokhale, were very encouraging. In one of them he made a suggestion that a Royal Commission should be appointed to find out whether the extent of the association of the people with the Government in force then was sufficient in the changed circumstances, and, if that was not so, to suggest what steps should be

taken to increase it. A Royal Commission did not materialize. But Morley and Minto were studying the situation and were keen on doing something, though not too much.

After the Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, India was restless and the revolutionary element in the country began to gather strength. It was fortunate that the Liberals came to power in England at the time. It was also fortunate that Lord Curzon had resigned because of differences with Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of India at the time. Had Curzon continued as the Viceroy, no one can say what turn the Indian agitation might not have taken. Gokhale and other leaders of his way of thinking found ample opportunity to impress on the Government that force was no remedy. It must be said in favour of Morley and Minto that they did not follow the wrong policy of Lord Curzon but silently worked against it. The acceptance of Fuller's resignation was an instance in point.

One can glimpse how Morley's mind worked then from the *Recollections* published in 1917. He keenly desired to do something which would mollify the resentment of the people though that something might not satisfy the nationalist element.

Gokhale had five interviews in all with Morley in 1906. In a letter to N.A. Dravid after the last interview, Gokhale wrote, "He (Morley) is the one friend (and I know this to be no more than the truth) fighting night and day in our interests against overwhelming odds, which are rendered all the more overwhelming by his comparative ignorance of Indian questions, and let us not leave the true enemies alone and direct our arrows at him." Morley wrote to Minto on August 2 and the letter is important and deserves reproduction : "Yesterday I had my fifth and final talk with Gokhale. It is of vast advantage that we should be on terms with him. I believe, from all I learn,

that his influence on the Indian section in the House of Commons has been most salutary and that he has stood up for my speech and its promise of good against the men who complained of it as vague, timid, tepid, hollow. He has a politician's head; appreciates administrative responsibility; has an eye for the tactics of practical common sense. He made no secret of his ultimate hope and design—India to be on the footing of selfgoverning colonies. I equally made no secret of my conviction, that for many a day to come—long beyond the short span of time that may be left to us—this was a mere dream. Then I said to him, 'For reasonable reforms in your direction, there is now an unexampled chance. You have a V. R (Viceroy) entirely friendly to them. You have S. O. S. (Secretary of State) in whom the Cabinet, the H. C., the press of both parties and so much of the public as troubles its head about India, reposes confidence. The important and influential civil service will go with the Viceroy. What situation could be more hopeful ? Only one thing can spoil it. Perversity and unreason in your friends. If they keep up the ferment in E. Bengal, that will only make it hard or even impossible for Government to move a step. I ask you for no sort of engagement. You must of course be a judge of your own duty, and I am aware you have your own difficulties. So be it. We are quite in earnest in our resolution to make an effective move. If your speakers or newspapers set to work to belittle what we do, to clamour for the impossible, then all will go wrong'."

In his letter to Dravid, Gokhale also asked him to do his best to prevent ungenerous criticism of Morley in the press. He wrote, "See Mr Kelkar and with him see Mr Tilak if necessary and beg them in my name to exert their influence for the sake of our common country to discourage any declaration on the part of our Indian Press just at present of want of faith in Morley." Gokhale did his best to deprecate ungenerous criticism of Morley; but the situation was not in

his hands Fuller's actions were not to end with his resignation. He had effectively sown the seeds of communal dissension in Bengal.

Morley really held that self-government of the colonial type for India was a dream. How could this enhance his esteem in the eyes of the nationalist elements in the country? They thought that Gokhale, simple and straight that he was, was being used for fulfilling the objects of the Government. In one of the speeches in his constituency Morley said, "Some of them (Indians) are angry with me. Why? Because I have not been able to give them the moon. I have got no moon and if I had, I would not give them the moon." Which Morley spoke thus, the philosopher and man of letters or the administrator, it is hard to say.

When Gokhale arrived at Bombay in September 1905, the situation in India was getting surcharged with emotion every day, and he was not sure of his ground. Those who opposed the Government in all that they said and did were favoured by the people. The Congress was on the point of being split between the moderates and the rest.

The fate of the Reforms, it was felt, hung in the balance. A complicating factor had also arisen: the bureaucracy was suspected of having made Muslim leaders lead a deputation to the Viceroy to press their claims. Lord Minto received a deputation of the Muslims headed by the Aga Khan in October 1906, at Simla. They wanted a separate share in whatever was being conceded to India. Fuller had played this game in East Bengal, Lord Curzon had set his seal on it by partitioning Bengal, and Lord Minto too fell in line with his predecessors! This ill-conceived move was to bear unexpected fruit in the years that followed.

Morley and Minto were corresponding on the form the

reforms should take. In June 1907, Morley, while speaking on the Budget, gave a broad outline of the contemplated scheme. He proposed a Royal Commission for studying the over-centralization of power in the Government of India, the Legislative Councils were to be expanded both at the Centre and in the Provinces; an Advisory Council of notables was to be established and two Indian members were to be nominated to the Council of the Secretary of State. Sir K. G. Gupta and Syed Hussein Bilgrami were immediately appointed to the Council.

This pronouncement did not create much enthusiasm in nationalist India. The moderates rather hoped that something tangible would yet emerge from this dry and cold statement. The resentment of the people was increasing as the Government was encouraging demands for separate representation in the representative bodies, in services and in other fields.

Ramsay MacDonald says*: "The All-India Moslem League was formed on December 30, 1906. The political successes which have rewarded the efforts of this League are so fresh that I need not refer to them specifically. They have been so signal as to give support to a suspicion that sinister influences have been at work, that the Mahomedan leaders were inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and that these officials pulled wires at Simla and in London and of malice aforethought sowed discord between the Hindu and Mahomedan communities by showing the Mahomedans special favour."

Not only MacDonald but Lord Morley was also convinced that Lord Minto was responsible for creating this feeling of separateness. He wrote in his letter to Lord Minto on

*The Awakening of India.

December 6, 1909 : "I won't follow you again into your Mahomedan dispute. Only I respectfully remind you once more that it was your early speech about their extra claims that first started the M. (Mahomedan) hare. I am convinced my decision was right !"

Gokhale had a difficult time of it as an intermediary. Lord Morley had some respect for him; but how about Minto, who looked upon him as a Hindu ? From Minto's letters it seems that he had no very high opinion of Gokhale. Here are some of the observations made by him from time to time : "He won't be a level-headed adviser". (This was Minto's opinion expressed in connection with Gokhale's proposed appointment as an adviser in the Council of the Secretary of State for India). Again, "I like what I have seen of Gokhale and am very far from saying that he is in sympathy with much of his party literature but he is playing with dangerous tools". Minto also wrote to Morley : "I never for an instant thought that our Reforms would be welcomed by the Extremists, but I hardly expected Gokhale would play such a stupid game. It is trash, his talking about the Bureaucracy putting down the Congress and brushing him and his friends aside. He could have played a great game if, while asserting his own political honesty, he had recognized our good intentions and done his best to assist the Government of India. I spoke very openly to him on these lines, but he has evidently no intention of coming to our support and what he has now written entirely gives him away." Gokhale, it is clear, did not enjoy the confidence of Lord Minto; he was looked upon as being no better than his compatriots in the other camp.

The Reforms Act was passed but the Rules and Regulations under it were left to be made by the Viceroy. Though Gokhale did not express dissatisfaction with the Act itself, he and others were greatly dissatisfied with its actual imple-

mentation. The Rules and Regulations took away with the left hand what had been given with the right. The real enemy thus proved to be not the statesmen in London but the bureaucracy in India. The Government of India knew the art of defeating the aims of their masters at home. The deportees and political convicts were debarred from contesting the elections. Gokhale made a grievance of it and Minto fell foul of him : "We cannot afford to take risks in India, and the opinions of an individual, claiming to be an authority on general outlook, as for instance Gokhale, are perfectly valueless and misleading, even giving them the benefit of doubt on the score of honesty."

In another connection Minto wrote : "I am sorry to say, I can call it mischievous, and written with the intention to mislead. Gokhale would not have spoken to me in the same sense. And that is the worst of him, that one cannot rely upon his absolute good faith." Absolute good faith apparently meant accepting blindly everything that the Government offered. Gokhale was not made of that stuff.

Morley's reply to Minto's letter shows that they did not differ much in their outlook. Morley wrote : "I rather smile at your warning me not to take Gokhale and his letters to third persons too seriously or too literally. Have you not found out that I am a peculiarly cautious and sceptical being ? Forgive my arrogance—but I must almost have been born a Scot ! But whether dealing with Parnell, Gokhale or any other of the political breed, I have a habit of taking them to mean what they say until and unless I find out a trick."

Such were the opinions held by these two about Gokhale. But they really made no difference to Gokhale. With him the interests of his country came first, whatever others thought of him. But the attitude of suspicion, and the disregard of

the poverty and sufferings of the people on the part of the rulers, embittered him.

The Indian Reforms Act of 1909 did not come up to India's expectations of a democratic set-up. Authority was concentrated at the Centre, the executive had supremacy over the legislature, the ultimate responsibility for the governance of India was vested in the British Parliament and the Government of India firmly ruled over the Provincial Governments. The new Reforms offered wider scope for election in the body politic, questions could be put in the legislatures and permission for moving resolutions secured. But the vicious principle of separate electorates was introduced obstructing any real advance in the set-up. The political prisoners continued to rot in jails, the repressive policy was intensified and the political wrong done by the Partition of Bengal was not redressed. It was left to George V and Lord Hardinge to do so later. Such was the atmosphere when these much talked-of reforms were introduced.

In all this, Gokhale's position was unenviable. He went to England for the fourth time in 1908, on behalf of the Bombay Presidency Association, for pleading, arguing with, and persuading Lord Morley before the Reforms were introduced.

He laboured hard for the sake of the country but success was not to be his at that time and in that context. Such causes, however, triumph in the end. And this was Gokhale's consolation, as that of many other patriots.

17

After Surat

AFTER THE SURAT Splist, the moderates remained the masters of the Congress, but the people drifted away from it. The prominent extremists were behind the bars; those who remained outside did not have new leaders under whom they could gather their forces and challenge the old leadership. But the militant temper released by the Partition of Bengal did not disappear and could not be brought under control. The Government for its part lacked foresight and confidence in its own administrative machinery. Over the years the Government had begun resisting even ordinary demands. The public services were virtually monopolized by the ruling class and were barred to Indians. "The history of the Civil Services is one unbroken record of broken promises", said Surendranath Banerjea. The Universities Act "sealed up the portals of knowledge with golden locks which would open only to golden keys," said Dr Gour. The Police Commission excluded Indians from special Police Services. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Seditious Meetings Act, the Official Secrets Act, the Press Act and certain other repressive Acts embittered the relations between the rulers and the ruled. Antagonism between them was growing fast. The Bengal Partition intensified it. Nine persons were deported for being the organizers of the youth of Bengal. In 1908 prominent newspapers in the Province were suppressed, and prominent leaders were sent to jail.

On April 30, 1908, two bombs were thrown at a carriage in Muzaffarpur killing two ladies instead of killing Kingsford, the notorious District Judge of the place, the intended victim. Khudiram Bose was executed for the murders. Bhupendranath Dutt, brother of Swami Vivekananda, openly preached the cult of violence and the brave man was given a heavy sentence. But youth in Bengal was out to face all consequences. In Maharashtra, Tilak, S. M. Paranjpe and others were sent to prison. "Soon, however, sedition disappeared from the land", says Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the author of the *History of Indian National Congress*. The movement went underground, and bombs and pistols came to dominate the scene. Sir Curzon Wylie was murdered in London by Madanlal Dhingra in January 1909, and Jackson, Collector of Nasik, in a theatre on December 21, 1909. Savarkar and his comrades were organizing secret societies. The Government hastily brought in measures to suppress the movement. Gokhale warned them in the debate on the Seditious Meetings Bill that the young men were getting out of control and that the elders could not be blamed for not being able to control them.

The announcement of the Morley-Minto Reforms came in 1908. But the tension was unrelieved. Gokhale repeatedly pointed out that, "Reforms delayed lost half their value and all their grace." The Reforms were, to begin with, heartily welcomed by the Congress; but, subsequently, the actual mode of their implementation caused disappointment. According to the Reforms, there was to be an official majority in the Supreme Legislative Council. Only 27 were elective seats out of the 60 additional seats. And the Muslims, as also certain other interests, were given special representation.

In 1909 the Congress session was held at Lahore, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya being the President. It passed four resolutions on the Reforms. The first disapproved the crea-

tion of separate electorates on the basis of religion. The second urged the Government to create Executive Councils in U. P., the Punjab, East Bengal, Assam and Burma. The third pointed out the unsatisfactory nature of the regulations in the Punjab, and the fourth expressed dissatisfaction over there being no Council for C. P. and Berar.

In 1910 and 1911 the Congress reiterated the resolutions of 1909 and protested against the application of the principle of separate electorates to the district boards and municipalities. In 1912 and 1913 the Congress asked for elected majorities both at the Centre and in the Provinces. Curiously enough, the Congress passed a clause to the effect that a person ignorant of English should be ineligible for membership : the Congress then had not reached out to the masses, the leaders of the Congress being all English-knowing persons.

The Reforms and their unsatisfactory nature formed the staple of the resolutions of the Congress in the ensuing years. No other lead was given or contemplated. But the country at large was not at all concerned with what was taking place at the top. The educated class was bitter, the poverty-stricken could see no ray of light, industry was neglected and the land suffered for want of attention.

The new spirit abroad had its own effects. The prohibitory orders against students led to the boycott of schools, followed by the establishment of national institutions in some parts of the country, especially in Bengal. "National lines, National control and National destiny", was the slogan of these institutions. The Swadeshi spirit spread far and wide. The handloom industry was revived. On August 7, 1905, the banner of boycott was hoisted. Though these movements could not bring the Government down, yet they greatly helped in creating a new spirit of defiance to Government and a new

outlook for the achievement of our goal. The national movement was thriving against heavy odds.

Morley and Minto were conscious of the fact that the new militant spirit was due to the Partition of Bengal. How to annul it ? "They did not want to yield to the pressure of public agitation. No way was revealed to them of restoring peace and order in the country. They decided to take advantage of the King's Coronation in Delhi. On December 12, 1911, King George V made the following declaration :

> "We are pleased to announce to our people that on the advice of our Ministers and after consulting with our Governor-General-in-Council, we have decided upon the transfer of the seat of the Government of India from Calcutta tothe ancient Capital of Delhi, and simultaneously as a consequence of that transfer the creation at as early a date as possible of a Governorship-in-Council for the Presidency of Bengal, of a new Lieutenant-Governorship-in-Council administering the areas of Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa and of a Chief Commissionership of Assam. It is our earnest desire that these changes may conduce to the greater prosperity and happiness of our beloved people."

Lord Curzon's dream was thus shattered and the people realized that not favour but pressure forces a Government to undo what it thoughtlessly launches upon.

The Government under Lord Hardinge, the new Viceroy, could have shown magnanimity by releasing all prisoners and starting with a clean slate. But that was not to be. All the repressive Acts were still there to threaten the agitators. And though Bengal had been reunited, the people and the Government were not. Lord Hardinge was comparatively a popu-

lar Viceroy; but the resentment of the people had not subsided and this was reflected in an attempt on his life in Delhi when he was being taken in a procession on his entry into Delhi, the new Capital, riding on an elephant. A bomb was thrown at him, but he narrowly escaped. The implementation of the Press Laws was immediately made stringent and the relations between the rulers and the ruled instead of undergoing a healthy change, worsened. However, the Congress in 1912 passed a resolution congratulating Lord Hardinge on his escape and condemning the outrage.

Gokhale was not a silent spectator of these momentous happenings in the country. As usual he sought mediation to bring about conciliation but the Government was in no mood to listen to sense and propriety.

To turn to the Reforms : at the Madras Congress in 1908, Gokhale made a speech outlining the merits and demerits of the Reforms. Characterizing the announcement as a partial fruition of the efforts of the Congress, he expressed the view that the Reforms should be used to the best advantage. Since they ushered in an element of popular responsibility, the people of India should not be dissatisfied with them. The following words sum up his approach : "And in so far as the Government of India will recede into background and as this official majority is mainly a reserve power, as practical men we should be satisfied with the scheme. We must gratefully accept this scheme as it stands because it must be accepted or rejected as a whole".

According to Gokhale, the set up of the Government had three tiers. The lower, namely, the local self governing institutions, were entirely entrusted to the charge of the people in the Reforms. The middle one consisted of the Provincial Governments. The top tier was the government (including the legislature) at the Centre. They had non-official majo-

rities in practice, though not a statutory one. The authority of the Central Executive and the Secretary of State remained as before, though some Indians had been appointed as members or advisers. This fact of residuary authority, thought Gokhale, was inevitable. He held that an excellent opportunity was afforded by the Reforms for the people to gain capacity for administration. The Reforms would end bureaucratic rule; therefore, the opportunity was not to be frittered away.

Gokhale was not greatly agitated by the communal feature of the elections. If the Muslims were satisfied with it, they would give whole-hearted co-operation in the conduct of national affairs. By that process alone could mutual faith be generated. When Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a resolution in the Supreme Legislative Council on January 24, 1911, for appointing a committee to consider changes in the Regulations made under the Reforms Act, Gokhale appealed to him not to press his resolution. Pandit Malaviya obviously wanted the committee to reconsider the issue of the separate electorates. Gokhale said, "If a question like this may be raised here, then cow-killing and the question about Hindu-Mahomedan riots and such others may be raised by somebody else in other places; and then that harmonious co-operation between the two communities would most unfortunately be disturbed."

The stir in the country and the lull in the Congress saw no abatement in Gokhale's interest in constructive causes. He wanted his Elementary Education Bill to be passed and wanted the South African Indian issue to be solved. Though he did not neglect other work, the stress was on achieving what was urgent, sound and valid. The appointment of a Public Service Commission, and his membership thereof, are instances in point. He was true to the principles that he

believed in, steadfast in his efforts, and he was not influenced by considerations of fear or favour.

Meanwhile, the annulment of the Bengal Partition had taken away much of the impetus in the agitation. Nevertheless, there was dissatisfaction everywhere excepting in the minds of a few. The Congress was growing weak, the militant forces had gone underground and the people in general had grown passive. It was only after World War I had broken out that a change took place in the situation.

18

Gokhale, Gandhiji and South Africa

I believe that Indians will rise in public esteem if all of them remain staunch in not submitting to the law, and that, moreover, it will evoke sympathy in India also for the cause of the Transvaal Indians.

[Mahatma Gandhi *on the Registration Act of the Transvaal* (April 30, 1907)]

WE NOW COME to the part of Gokhale's life and work which he devoted to the cause of the people of Indian origin in South Africa. It was to bring Gandhiji into close contact with him, an association that Gandhiji so greatly treasured that he described himself as Gokhale's disciple.

Africa had even by the opening years of this century, a fairly long and sad history so far as peoples of non-European descent were concerned. The African continent was a vast playground for the European nations. Africans were looked upon by these exploiters as a lower order of human beings created for their express benefit and profit.

South Africa emerged into history in the seventeenth century. The relative remoteness of South Africa had its effect on the attitude of the Whites, who were more uncompromising

than their counterparts in other parts of Africa. The descendants of the first settlers called themselves Afrikanders. They mixed with the English colonists after the Cape was occupied by Britain in 1795. The British remained in the two coastal colonies of the Cape and Natal, while the Afrikanders later trekked to establish the two northern republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. After the defeat of the Afrikanders in the Boer War, the two colonies and the two republics were welded together in the Union formed in 1910. This was dominated by the British then.

Gandhiji had entered this vast scene of human misery before the Boer War, in May 1893. By that time, some 1,50.000 emigrants from India had settled down in South Africa, most of them in Natal. They were mostly indentured labourers from India to bring the country under the plough and make it prosperous. These were followed by traders and other enterprising people. The Whites did not take kindly to this large-scale immigration of non-Whites. The Indian labourers were welcome only so long as they did work That phase of the opening up of the country being now over, the feeling was that the Indian 'coolies' should be sent back. Humiliating con 'itions were imposed in order to make their stay in South Africa difficult. The Orange Free State passed a Special Act in 1888 depriving Indians of all their rights. The Transvaal had passed a stringent enactment even earlier, in 1885, by which every Indian had to pay a poll tax of £ 3 for entering the territory.

In 1893 the White colonists celebrated the grant of responsible government to them by imposing a tax of £ 25 on non-Whites. The Government of India had to be consulted in the matter under the terms of the contract by which indentured labour had been supplied from India. The Viceroy, Lord Elgin, did not find anything wrong in the principle of the tax but reduced the amount of tax to £ 3.

Invidious taxation was not the only humiliation : Indians were subjected to daily insults. They were not allowed to travel first class. They could not build houses in European localities. They were denied admission to restaurants and hotels. They were not even allowed to use the roads used by the Europeans. And, of course, they were ineligible to vote. The Europeans, in short, would have been glad if all those of Indian origin had withdrawn from South Africa. The Indians were not willing to do so. Their blood, toil, sweat, and tears had gone into making South Africa prosperous. They had some right to the fruits of their labour, especially as citizens of the British Empire.

Gandhiji was on the African scene awakening the Indians and rousing them to their right to equality of treatment in the land of their adoption. All this history is given extensively by Gandhiji in the book, *Satyagraha in South Africa.*

The year 1899 was important in the history of South Africa. The British and the Boers were fighting the Boer War. One of the reasons for it, as given out by the British, was that the Indians in South Africa were not being fairly treated. This was a pretence, for the British did not treat the Indians any better than the Afrikanders treated them. During the war Gandhiji organized an ambulance corps for helping the British. It was not recognized in the beginning; but as mass massacres took place, the help of the ambulance corps was needed; and Gandhiji rendered the service he had intended to do as a subject of the British Empire.

The war ended in the victory of the British. Gandhiji thought that his work in South Africa was over. The British, he thought, would treat Indians, their fellow subjects, with decency and fairness. He wanted to practise before the Bombay High Court and go in for public work under the guidance of Gokhale. But before he could settle down to his practice in Bombay, he received a cable to return to Africa as the situation

there was going from bad to worse.

Reaching Durban, he found that while the political set-up had changed, the lot of the Indians had not. The new Government tried to bring the four colonies together. Anti-Indian legislative measures were not only given fresh life, their enforcement was made more rigorous. The interests of the British traders were to be scrupulously guarded as against the interests of the Indians. How could that be if discrimination was not resorted to and Indians were not relegated to an inferior status? An ordinance was issued making it compulsory for every Indian to register his name with the Registrar of Asiatics and carry with him a certificate of registration.

A spirit of resistance to the invidious measure spread all over the country. Gandhiji told the Indians to be true to themselves. If their inner voice told them that it was a sin and that they should resist it all, then alone could they succeed. The number of Indians was not very large, and they had been trained by Gandhiji not to do anything violent even against physical torture.

The number of persons who registered themselves was only 500. The authorities were naturally alarmed at this defiance, and tried to bring about a compromise. Gandhiji and J. C. Smuts had talks on January 30, 1908. It was agreed that the Act of compulsory registration should be withdrawn and that the Indians should register themselves of their own accord. Gandhiji was warned by some against entering into what they considered to be a cleverly laid trap. But Gandhiji, being Gandhiji, was not of this view.

A number of Indians voluntarily registered their names but the Act was not withdrawn and Smuts broke his promise. This meant more strength to Gandhiji who asked the people to

burn their registration certificates. Satyagraha was thus inaugurated—and in South Africa.

The Boers and the British were anxious to establish a Union of the South African colonies. It would give them a higher status in the Empire. They went on a deputation to the British Cabinet. As the Indian interests were not safeguarded, Gandhiji and Sheth Hajee Habib were deputed by the Indian community to present their case. Lord Crewe and Morley gave a sympathetic hearing to them. But it was all in vain. The political noise of the Whites drowned the small voice of the Indians.

Though Gandhiji was not successful in his mission to England, his motherland and its leaders did not give him up. Gokhale ran to his help. In the Congress session held at Lahore in 1909, Gokhale moved a resolution on South Africa, his speech on the occasion being a memorabale one. Speaking on passive resistance Gokhale said, "What is the passive resistance struggle ? It is essentially defensive in its nature and it fights with moral and spiritual weapons. A passive resister resists tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He puts soul force against brute force, he puts the divine in man against the brute in man, he pits suffering against oppression, he pits conscience against might, he pits faith against injustice, right against wrong." Gandhiji must have been glad to read this stirring exposition of passive resistance from Gokhale, whom he had already enshrined in his heart as his master.

Speaking about Gandhiji Gokhale said on the occasion : "It is one of the privileges of my life that I know Mr Gandhi intimately, and I can tell you that a purer, a nobler, a braver, a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth. Mr Gandhi is one of those men, who, living an austerely simple life themselves and, devoted to all the highest principles of love

to their fellow-beings, and to truth and justice, touch the eyes of their weaker brethren as with magic and give them a new vision. He is a man who may be described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot among patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has reached its high water-mark." What a lasting and true picture Gokhle has here given of Gandhiji !

Did Gokhale accept passive resistance as a means to an end, or did he, like a philosopher, merely comment favourably on the new weapon ? Addressing a meeting in Bombay in 1909 Gokhale said, "Surely a man who can achieve this must represent a moral force and must not be lightly judged. I am sure we all think that Mr Gandhi is perfectly justified in resorting to passive resistance when all other means of redress failed. I am sure, if any of us had been in the Transvaal during these days, we would have been proud to range ourselves under Mr Gandhi's banner and work with him and suffer with him in the great cause." Thus Gokhale not only accepted passive resistance in principle but would have been proud to practise it.

This does not, however, mean that Gokhale accepted whatever Gandhiji said. When Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati was prescribed by the Bombay Government and he later published it in English, Gokhale thought it so crude and hastily conceived that he prophesied that Gandhiji himself would destroy the book after spending a year in India. Nothing of the sort happened. As for Gandhiji himself, he considered that book the basis of his philosophy. And for his part, Gandhiji did not like either extremist or moderate methods, as he thought "that either party relied on violence ultimately". Thus, though Gandhiji and Gokhale differed on some fundamental issues, they largely agreed with each other and respected each other.

Gokhale's speech on the South Africa resolution at the

Lahore Congress had a magical effect. Gandhiji was given a standing ovation. Gold and currency notes were showered on him to aid the struggle in South Africa. Ratan Tata congratulated Gandhiji on the heroic part he was playing in the struggle and sent Rs. 25,000. The Nizam of Hyderabad sent Rs. 2,500 and the Aga Khan collected Rs. 3,000 at the session of the Muslim League and sent Gandhiji the amount. Gandhiji wrote to Gokhale detailed accounts as to how the sums were spent. He also wrote frequently to Gokhale on the progress of the struggle. Meanwhile, Gandhiji and his comrades were defying the Act: they were repeatedly imprisoned and let out.

1911 was an important year in the epic struggle in South Africa. The Union Government chose to bend a little. They were anxious to placate the Indians as the Coronation celebrations were due to be held in July 1911. Earlier, Gokhale had moved a resolution on February 25, 1910, in the Imperial Legislative Council that the recruitment in British India of indentured labour for Natal be forthwith prohibited. The Government of India accepted the resolution and strongly recommended it. In October of the same year Lord Ampthill and the South African Committee agitated for the repeal of the obnoxious Act of 1907. The removal of the racial bar and the immigration of Indians to the minimum of highly educated men, were some of the demands. In the circumstances, the South African Union Government published a Bill on February 11, 1911, which did not give satisfaction to the Indians there. Gandhiji wrote against it, though welcoming the repeal of the Act of 1907. Only in the Transvaal, the Indians and the Chinese were allowed to resume their occupations. Gandhiji stopped the passive resistance struggle.

It was all hailed as a great triumph for Gandhiji, though it was not so. The attitude of the South African authorities had not changed, though circumstances had made them bend

a little. The Coronation celebrations were boycotted by the Indians in South Africa as they were not treated on a footing of equality by the Europeans taking part in them.

After the Coronation a fresh Immigration Bill was introduced in the South African Union Parliament. It was dropped but the period of provisional settlement was extended by a year. The South African problem had not been solved; the struggle had not ended, it was only postponed. Even to this day Indians in South Africa have not secured equality of treatment.

Gandhiji's request to Gokhale to visit South Africa and see for himself the sorrows and sufferings of the Indians was a long-standing one. In 1911, while Gokhale was in England, he decided to accept Gandhiji's invitation. Gokhale conferred with the Secretary of State for India and informed him of his proposed visit. The Government assured him of every facility and help. The South African Union Government also welcomed the visit.

Gokhale's visit to South Africa was no ordinary event in Gandhiji's life. Apart from politics Gandhiji looked upon Gokhale with great respect. In 1896, when Gandhiji had come to India, he had met many leaders but none had captivated his heart as Gokhale had done. A word of appreciation from Gokhale delighted him as nothing else could. Gandhiji called Gokhale his guru, and this expressed the relationship between them only in a measure.

Gokhale's visit to South Africa was thus an occasion of profound joy to him. Gandhiji had long planned as to how Gokhale was to be received. Gokhale's poor health, his susceptibilities, the house where he was to be lodged, even the furniture that was to be used—all had received loving attention.

Gokhale reached Capetown on October 22, 1912. The Union Governmment received him cordially and placed a railway saloon at his disposal. For a moment racial prejudices had disappeared and the Whites vied with Indians in welcoming him. Mr Runciman of the Immigration Department was deputed to escort Gokhale throughout the tour. Hundreds of Indians received him with a feeling of gratefulness. A mammoth procession was arranged headed by fifty carriages. Gokhale was welcomed everywhere amid shouts of 'Bande Mataram.' At a big meeting held there Gokhale won the hearts of the Europeans by his sincere and eloquent speech, full of humility, warmth and love.

After his reception at Capetown, Gokhale was to go to Johannesburg, the battlefield of the Satyagraha struggle. The Europeans there attended th grand reception in quite large numbers and the Mayor presided and read the address of welcome. The Mayor was good enough to place his car at the disposal of the honourable guest. The reason was obvious. The Europeans were conscious that Gokhale's tour had the approval of the British Government. A special office was set up in the city for Gokhale where he could have interviews and receive visitors. Throughout the tour Gandhiji was with him and acted as his secretary. A private meeting of Europeans was organized to give Gokhale an opportunity to understand their point of view. A banquet was also arranged in his honour to which 400 were invited, including 150 Europeans. It was probably the first occasion in the lives of many Europeans when they sat down to a public dinner with Indians. Gokhale made a very important speech on the occasion, clear and persuasive but firm.

A public meeting also was arranged for the benefit of the Indians in the city. In what language was Gokhale to address it ? In English ? In Hindi ? English would have been out of place and Gokhale did not know Hindi much. Gandhiji suggested that he should address them in Marathi as there were

some Konkani Muslims and Maharashtrians in the audience. Gandhiji made the further proposal that he himself would translate the Marathi speech into Hindi. On hearing this, Gokhale burst into laughter. He said, "I have quite fathomed your knowledge of Hindi, an accomplishment upon which you cannot be exactly congratulated. But now you propose to translate Marathi into Hindi. May I know where you acquired such knowledge of Marathi ?" Gandhiji replied, "What is true of my Hindustani is equally true of my Marathi. I cannot speak a single word of Marathi; but I am confident of gathering the purport of your Marathi speech on a subject with which I am familiar. In any case you will see that I do not misinterpret you to the people." Gokhale accepted the suggestion and spoke in Marathi. Throughout his tour from Johannesburg to Zanzibar, Gokhale's Marathi speeches were translated by Gandhiji into Hindustani. Gokhale was on the whole satisfied with the performance of his disciple. Gandhiji was highly pleased that in South Africa at least, where Indians were fighting for a common cause, no language other than Indian ones was used for the purpose.

From Natal Gokhale was to go to Pretoria where he was to be a guest of the Union Government. He was to meet General Smuts and General Botha and a battle royal was to be fought between them. Gokhale, as we know, tried to be accurate in every detail. He asked Gandhiji to give him a summary of the Indian case in the four colonies. Gokhale kept himself and others awake the whole night and secured full details on every important point. He prepared himself thus for the talks which took place on November 15 and lasted for two hours. The atmosphere was friendly. Firm commitments must have been few, but promises many. Gokhale came out and told Gandhiji, "You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the immigration laws. The £3 tax will be abolished."

Gandhiji was not, however, as hopeful as Gokhale. He knew the Generals better than Gokhale, and told Gokhale, "It is enough for me that you have obtained this undertaking from the Ministers. The promise given to you will serve as proof of the justice of our demands and will redouble our fighting spirit if it comes to fighting at all. But I do not think I can return to India in a year and before many more Indians have gone to jail."

Before going to Pretoria, Gokhale stayed at 'Tolstoy Farm', Gandhiji's Ashram, from November 2 to 4. Gandhiji was his personal attendant besides being his personal secretary. He nursed him and cooked for him and ironed the scarf, the rich legacy from Ranade himself, to Gokhale's joy. 'Tolstoy Farm,' its surroundings, the simple life led by the inmates, the boys undergoing training there and many other things besides impressed Gokhale greatly and his regard for Gandhiji grew.

On November 17, Gokhale left South Africa. Gandhiji and Kallenbach, Gandhiji's co-worker, accompanied him as far as Zanzibar. On their way to Zanzibar, Gokhale was accorded a warm reception at several ports. Gokhale wanted Gandhiji to go to India and take up the leadership of the freedom struggle. Gandhiji noted in this context : "He analysed for me the characters of all leaders in India and his analysis was so accurate that I have hardly perceived any difference between Gokhale's estimate and my own personal experience of them ..... (We) hoped that Gokhale's prophecy would come true and that both of us would be able to go to India in a year's time. But that was not to be."

After Gokhale's departure from South Africa both the Generals broke the promises given to Gokhale. Nothing was mended. After all, Gandhiji's earlier reading of the situation had proved right. The old order was to continue. Gandhiji felt it to be an insult to India, and Gokhale was deeply pained.

When Gokhale reached Bombay, Pherozeshah Mehta and Wacha condemned the compromise entered into, and harshly criticized Gokhale for it. They said that in return for the abolition of £ 3 tax, Gokhale had committed himself to the restriction on immigration into South Africa, which was wrong. There could be no restriction on the movements of the subjects of the British Empire. Gokhale and Gandhiji, in their opinion, had bartered away the Indian's fundamental right. However, the session of the Congress held immediately thereafter approved the agreement arrived at by Gokhale with the two Generals.

Gokhale's appreciation of Gandhiji and of his achievements in South Africa are to be treasured. After reaching Bombay, he said at a meeting: "Only those who have come in personal contact with Gandhiji, as he is now, can realize the wonderful personality of the man. He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay, more, he has in him the marvellous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs. In all my life I have known only two men, who affected me spiritually in the manner that Gandhi does—our great patriarch, Dadabhai Naoroji, and my late master, Mr Ranade. The Indian cause in South Africa has really been built up by Mr Gandhi. He has sacrificed himself utterly in the service of the cause One most striking fact about him is that though he has waged this great struggle so ceaselessly, his mind is absolutely free from all bitterness against Europeans. And in my tour nothing warmed my heart more than to see the universal esteem in which the European community in South Africa holds Mr Gandhi."

Meanwhile, in South Africa, while the promise given for repealing the tax was recanted, a new development took place. The Supreme Court gave a very insulting judgment, not recognizing marriages that had taken place outside Africa; hence not permitting duly wedded wives in India to land on

African soil. A Muslim's wife was ordered to be deported. This created an alarming situation. Women resorted to passive resistance. They crossed the prohibited border to get arrested. Gandhiji's wife, Kasturba, was one among them, though she was not keeping good health.

But the main grievance was about the Immigration Law and the poll tax. Gandhiji fought one of the most memorable campaigns in his life in 1913 in South Africa. The narrative is full of thrilling incidents and instances of supreme sacrifice. Coal miners struck work. Other labourers laid down their tools in large numbers. The army of civil resisters mounted to several thousands. 6,000 persons had to be fed. Gandhiji cooked food along with others for men and women who were ready to offer Satyagraha.

How long could they be kept in camp ? Gandhiji planned a march—an epic march—of this non-violent army to areas which were banned to Indians. Arrests, firing and deaths took place. The situation was taking a terrible turn. How could Gandhiji remain outside ? He, Kallenbach and Polak were arrested and brought before a magistrate. The Government could not get a witness. As a true Satyagrahi, Gandhiji went to the help of the Government and supplied them with witnesses. He was a witness in the trial of Kallenbach and Polak. All of them were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

While Gandhiji and thousands of his followers were undergoing their terms of imprisonment, Gokhale continued to render all possible assistance to the Satyagrahis. The Viceroy of India and the Indian press were expressing their sympathy for the sufferers. There was condemnation of the brutalities of the Union Government. The Secretary of State could not remain passive. He was writing to the Union Government to stop the excesses; the Union Government to save their face appointed a Commission with Mr Justice Solomon as Chairmant to inquire

into the causes of the Natal Indian strike which was an offshoot of the trouble. The trouble was owing to the tax. The Commission recommended the release of Gandhiji and he was released on December 18, 1913. Gandhiji, however, was not satisfied with the personnel of the Commission as no Indian had been appointed thereon and decided to boycott it.

The shooting of innocent labourers pained Gandhiji. He imposed on himself the triple vow that until the tax was removed he was to adopt a labourer's dress, to walk barefooted and to take but one meal a day. He declared at a meeting that if the just grievances of Indians were not removed he would resort to passive resistance from January 1, 1914. The Indian National Congress met at Karachi in December 1913 and passed a resolution embodying its "warm and grateful appreciation of the heroic struggle" in South Africa.

Gokhale had felt that the appointment of the Commission would put a stop to further troubles, but it did not. Gandhiji and others had taken a solemn pledge not to give evidence before the Commission but to take up the march. Gokhale was greatly moved when he heard that Gandhiji was adamant. He had talks with Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy. He made a speech in Madras in which he narrated the tragic events in South Africa. He said that he was personally exasperated at the action of the Union Government. He was told that there had been no movement like it since the Indian Mutiny. He asked the Union Government to appoint a Committee upon which Indian interests were fully represented to go into the whole question. A speech made at this time by Lord Hardinge created a stir not only in England, but in the Union itself. General Botha and General Smuts pressed for his recall but Hardinge stood by what he had said. The question of his recall was seriously discussed in the British Cabinet and given up as it would have created a serious situation in India.

As a result of the strong stand taken by Lord Hardinge a Commission was appointed but it did not include any Indian. This pained Gandhiji. Lord Hardinge deputed Sir Benjamin Robertson to give evidence before the Commission on behalf of India.

Gokhale thought that Gandhiji should give up all thought of struggle but Gandhiji thought otherwise. Gandhiji sent a long cable, costing £ 100, to Gokhale explaining his stand. The cable caused a set-back in Gokhale's health, who was already bed-ridden. His diabetes took an acute turn and this affected his heart. Gokhale had, moreover, many worries and obligations. He was also on the Public Service Commission. Sastri says, "I remember during this crisis he held his heart with his right hand and walked with a stoop. Occasionally he seemed to have come to the end of his tether, and we watched him with a feeling of tragedy near. Once he burst out : 'Surely the Viceroy is right. Gandhi has no business to take a vow and tie himself up. This is politics and compromise is its essence'."

Gokhale loved Gandhiji and wanted his sufferings to end. But Gandhiji was made of different stuff, as Gokhale himself put it Gandhiji had asked for Gokhale's blessings in the observance of the pledge. Gokhale, though not agreeing with the pledge, had not stopped helping Gandhiji. Apart from the generous contributions from Indian Princes, Ramsay MacDonald Sir Valentine Chirol and the acting Governor of Madras were also contributing to the fund. The Union Government was then in difficulties : the European employees in the Railways were on strike. The strike situation grew serious and martial law was declared by the Government to break it. General Smuts requested Gandhiji to suspend the Satyagraha, be ready to give evidence before the Commission and give him respite Gandhiji, seeing their predicament, declared that the march would be given up. This decision crea-

ted a very good impression and changed the atmosphere. General Smuts was also pleased with "the self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry". Gandhiji had now his first interview with General Smuts. After a few more interviews the Gandhi-Smuts agreement was reached on January 21, 1914.

The Commission of Inquiry was engaged in its work. Sir Benjamin Robertson, instead of helping the Indians, bullied them and took them to task for not tendering evidence before the Commission. Gandhiji and his followers did not tender evidence and this shortened the work of the Commission. Their recommendations were later on accepted and embodied in "The Indians' Relief Bill". The principal provisions in the Bill were : abolition of the £ 3 tax, the legalizing of all marriages in South Africa deemed legal in India, and making a domicile certificate bearing a holder's thumb print sufficient evidence of the right to enter the Union. The Bill was passed by sixty-four votes against twenty-four on June 26, 1914.

Thus ended the long-drawn struggle from 1906 to 1914. Gandhiji, Gokhale, Smuts and Lord Hardinge were the protagonists in this glorious chapter of history in Gandhiji's life. Gandhiji's mission in Africa thus came to an end, and his family decided to leave Africa, to face another historic fight in India.

Gandhiji did not go back direct to India. Gokhale was ailing in London and had sent word to Gandhiji to return home *via* London. Gandhiji obeyed his master, left Africa on July 18, 1914 and reached London on August 2, two days prior to the declaration of World War I. He could not meet Gokhale in London who had gone to Paris for reasons of health, and could not be contacted as the war had cut off communications between Paris and London. In October, Gokhale returned to London and Gandhiji saw him. Both of them were ill. Gokhale was suffering from heart trouble and

Gandhiji had an attack of pleurisy. Each was solicitous about the health of the other. Gokhale, being the elder, urged his obstinate disciple not to go in for dietetic experiments. Gokhale persuaded Gandhiji to be guided by the advice of his doctor, Dr Jivaraj Mehta. Gandhiji ultimately agreed to accept medical advice. As London's foggy weather did not suit Gokhale's health, he left for India. Gandhiji was to return to India in January 1915, to find his guru on his death-bed.

19

The Final Phase

GOKHALE LEFT ENGLAND and reached India on November 20, 1914. This visit to England, the seventh and last, was in connection with the meetings of the Public Service Commission of which he was a member. His health had so deteriorated that medical experts in England thought that he would not survive for more than three years. He was not unduly perturbed by the verdict and carried on his work with his usual equanimity.

Soon after his return, Gandhiji went to Poona to meet him. In an interview to the Press, he said, "For the present, as Gokhale has very properly pointed out, I, having been out of India for so long, have no business to form my definite opinion about matters essentially Indian, and that I should pass some time here as an observer and a student. This I have promised to do and I hope to carry out my promise." He thus gave an indication of his resolve to remain in India and serve the motherland for the rest of his days.

Gokhale was keen on Gandhiji's joining the Servants of India Society. That was Gandhiji's wish too. But the life-members of the society were not very keen. They felt that there were differences in his ideals and methods of work and those of the Society, and that it would not be proper for him to join them immediately. Gokhale consoled Gandhiji by saying, "I am hoping they will accept you, but if they don't, you will not for

a moment think that they are lacking in respect or love for you. They are hesitating to take any risk lest their high regard for you should be jeopardized. But whether you are formally admitted as a member or not, I am going to look upon you as one." And this avowal was what mattered to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji, who had come back to India with the inmates of the Phoenix Ashram, wanted to found an *ashram*. Gokhale made him a characteristically generous offer: "Whatever may be the result of your talks with the members, you must look to me for the expenses of the *ashram* which I will regard as my own." He asked a colleague to open an account for Gandhiji in the Society's books and give him whatever he might require for the expenses of the *ashram* and for his public work. It was this unbounded love that made Gandhiji say that Gokhale was like the Ganges. And soon after his visit to Poona, Gandhiji went to Santiniketan. It was there that he received news of Gokhale's death. He had come to regard Gokhale his master. Gokhale, indeed, was more than a guru to him; he was as a father and mother to him. At a condolence meeting Gandhiji gave expression to his grief and said, "I set out to find a true hero and I found only one in the whole of India. That hero was Gokhale." As a sign of mourning he decided to go barefoot for a year. He hurried back to Poona on February 22. He was now determined to join the Society. While Gokhale was there, he told himself, he did not have to seek admission as a member. Now it was his duty to do so.

Opinion was divided in the Society. There were prolonged discussions among the members; they met again and came to a decision which did scant justice to Gokhale's memory and the unique personality of Gandhiji. "After much deliberation", they said, "it has been decided, owing to certain differences of views, at Mr Gandhiji's own request and conformably to Mr Gokhale's intention, that he should tour round the country for

one year under Rule 17 of the Constitution of the Society before the question of his joining the Servants of India Society should be finally settled." The day of decision was thus put off. When Gandhiji came to know that there were sharp differences among the members, he preferred to withdraw his application for admission. In doing so, he thought that he was expressing loyalty to the Society and Gokhale. To Srinivasa Sastri, the President of the Society, he wrote, "The withdrawal of my application made me truly a member of the Society." He meant that he continued to be close to Gokhale in spirit.

At the time of his death, Gokhale's work with the Public Service Commission had not concluded. The appointment of the Commission itself could be said to have been in response to the persistent demand of the Congress that discrimination in the services between Europeans and Indians be ended. Gokhale had also been pressing for a recognition of the legitimate claims of Indians in his annual Budget speeches. He had also spoken at great length before the Welby Commission about the virtual exclusion of Indians from the higher services. On March 17, 1911 Mr N. Subba Rao Pantulu moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council recommending the appointment of a Commission consisting of officials and non-officials for considering the claims of Indians to higher and more extensive employment in the civil administration in the country. Gokhale powerfully supported the resolution but the Government was in no mood to accept the resolution and went in for dilatory tactics.

Some twenty-five years earlier a Public Service Commission had been appointed, and Ranade had been a member. The Government had been niggardly in accepting the Commission's recommendations and little progress had been made to the great disappointment of Indians. The Government spokesman now said that the recommendations of that Commission would be sent to the local Governments to ascertain how far the

recommendations could be carried out in practice. It was the usual attempt to deny in practice what could not be repudiated in words. But the times were not favourable to such tactics and because of the imminence of the King-Emperor's visit the Government did not want any agitation to be launched on the occasion.

About a year and a half after the introduction of the resolution, an announcement was made of the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the public services in India. Lord Islington was the Chairman, and there were three Indians among the members : Gokhale, M.B. Chaubal, and Abdur Rahim. Mr Ramsav MacDonald and Sir Valentine Chirol were among the British members. The Commission had a decisive majority of officials and their supporters, and the Indians were in a minority of three against eight.

The Commission started work in Madras in December 1912 and submitted its report on August 14, 1915. It began recording evidence at the beginning of 19 3, visiting the principal cities. It also went to England where Gokhale, as we saw, stayed for four months. As a member of the Commission Gokhale had a hard task. The bureaucracy was arrayed against him. Witness after witness came forward to tell the Commission that intelligence and ability were lacking in India and that was why more Indians could not be recruited. Gokhale had to cross-examine with skill and perseverance. At night, he had to sift the written evidence so that the adverse depositions could be rebutted. All this required work of the most arduous kind such as Gokhale alone perhaps was capable of.

Gokhale did not live to see the completion of the Commission's work. The report itself would not have been so unsatisfactory had Gokhale been alive. But the strain of working twenty hours a day told on his indifferent health and hastened

his end. It was said at the time that the South Africa (Indian) question took ten years off his life and the Public Service Commission another ten years.

Mr Chaubal differed from the findings of the Commission but signed the majority report. He was, we may record, a member of the Executive Council of the Bombay Government. Mr Abdur Rahim, a High Court Judge at Madras, was bold enough to write a dissenting minute, a minority report with himself as the sole signatory. Majority and minority reports alike deplored the death of Gokhale. The majority report said, "He (Gokhale) had been ill for some months, but with characteristic fortitude and self-sacrifice, had not hesitated to take a prominent part in our proceedings. We owe much to the ripe experience gained by him in his lifelong service of his country and are confident that in many of the recommendations the spirit of his counsel will be found reflected." Mr Abdur Rahim said, "He (Gokhale) had studied the questions relating to the Public Services in the country with his usual care and earnestness, and I must acknowledge that I have derived much confidence from the fact that the main proposals which I have ventured to put forward had his entire approval and were virtually formulated in consultation with him."

Abdur Rahim unveiled the portrait of Gokhale at Madras some time later. His estimate of Gokhale is worth mentioning: "I had met him very seldom and did not know him very well but it did not take very long for me to realize what a great man he was both in intellect and as regards character. In fact, whenever he argued a question, it was most difficult for anyone to reply to him. He was so precise in facts, such a great master of everything appertaining to the subject that it was almost impossible to tackle all his arguments with any ease."

The Islington Commission had not been appointed with grace; and its recommendations were not acted upon with alacrity. Its intention was not so much to invite the cooperation of Indians in the administration of the country as to prevent an agitation on the eve of Their Majesties' arrival in India. The report, submitted when the Great War had been in progress for nearly a year, did not receive much attention in the country. In the circumstances, the Indians who thought it would collect dust in the governmental archives were not far wrong.

However, the war itself brought about some change in the attitude of the British Government to India. It was essential for the effective prosecution of the defence effort that the rulers should secure the support of the Indian people. The Right Honourable Mr Srinivasa Sastri in his lectures on Gokhale has narrated graphically an incident about the part played by the Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, whom Sastri calls "a true liberal". Soon after the declaration of war had been made, Willingdon felt "that a time had come for the Government, of their own accord, to do something striking in that direction." In the beginning of 1915 he came to the conclusion that "British statesmen should not wait until India clamoured for political advance." The initiative, he felt, should be taken by them.

Gokhale was then still on the scene, and it was natural that Lord Willingdon should turn to Gokhale for an indication of the minimum reforms that would satisfy India. Lord Willingdon felt that any scheme prepared by Gokhale could be adopted as the Government's own. The matter was to be kept very confidential. The reason for Willingdon's choice falling on Gokhale was that in his view Gokhale knew the limits up to which there could be give and take. He also enjoyed the confidence of British statesmen; anything coming from Gokhale

would be seriously considered. It is also highly probable that Willingdon was used as a mediator by someone higher up. Gokhale was not concerned about the original source of the move, but he was not prepared to undertake the heavy task unless he was sure that the contents of that scheme would be supported with some unanimity by the leading statesmen in India.

Gokhale's anxiety was justifiable. If his peers and elders in India thought that the scheme had originated from Gokhale they would have in all probability rejected it for being pitched either too low or too high. It was therefore natural that Gokhale sought the consent of Lord Willingdon to consult Pherozeshah Mehta and the Aga Khan; Lord Willingdon was agreeable to the course of action suggested.

Gokhale could not go to Bombay as his health took a turn for the worse. To invite them to Poona would have been construed as derogatory to the status of the two eminent leaders. Finally an invitation was sent to them to come to Poona for discussing with Gokhale a very urgent matter of political importance. Before a date for the meeting could be fixed, however, Gokhale began to feel that the end was near. Lord Willingdon, not knowing the precarious condition of Gokhale's health, sent him a reminder. This was on a Wednesday. On Friday Gokhale died. "Gokhale summoned what strength was left in him and we now have in the Society a pencil draft in his own hand", says Sastri.

After Gokhale's death, three copies of the draft went out, one to Lord Willingdon, another to Mehta, and the third to the Aga Khan.

It was a confidential document which saw the light in August 1917, when Montagu made his declaration about the Reforms. His Highness the Aga Khan published the draft in

England and Mr Sastri published it in India. It was called 'Gokhale's Political Will and Testament'. Sastri did not look upon it as such, and rightly. It was only a draft scheme laying down the minimum to be offered by the Government as of its own accord. The proposals made in the scheme were to be granted "at once", and voluntarily, by Britain to keep India contented at least for the time being; for the termination of the war might open a brighter chapter in the history of India.

Gokhale wanted *Swaraj* for India. By *Swaraj* he meant the attainment by India of a status politically equal to that which the self-governing dominions enjoy. No more; not outside but within the ambit of the British Commonwealth. And how would he attain this end ? By purely constitutional methods."+ This is Gokhale's conception of *Swaraj* as interpreted by Sastri. This could, therefore, still be called his last will and testament. Whether it was *Swaraj* or self-government of the pattern of the colonies, Gokhale never lost sight of the important thing that the advance had to be peaceful and orderly. It is worth recalling that until 1930 Gandhiji, too, did not hesitate to interpret *Swaraj* as dominion status. As times changed and as the British Government lost the confidence of Indians, Gandhiji had to modify the definition of *Swaraj*. The new goal was *Purna Swaraj* or independence, although the means for achieving the end would be non-violent.

The strands of the moderate-extremist controversy may now be taken up. After the split in the Congress at Surat, Tilak was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and was transported to Mandalay. The moderates came to have untrammelled control of the Congress machinery. For want of any opposition, the Congress sessions became progressively duller and did not evoke much countrywide enthusiasm. How could an anaemic national organization meet the challenge of the

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+Sastri : *Life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* p. 120.

Government's policy of ruthless repression ? This made some of the moderates feel that the extremist section that had gone out ought to be brought back to revitalize the Congress.

Gauging the popular feeling rightly, Gokhale tried hard to persuade his senior colleagues to be alive to the realities of the situation and extend their hand to the extremists. By and large, it was agreed that a compromise formula for the honourable re-entry of the seceders should be devised. The compromise contemplated was that the delegates to the Congress need not necessarily be elected by the Congress units. They could as well be elected by public organizations whether affiliated or not to the Congress, provided they accepted article I of its Constitution. A further development was to allow the delegates to be elected at public meetings provided the meetings were summoned by such organizations.

This compromise formula had a history behind it. Lokamanya Tilak, an advocate of a united Congress even after the split at Surat, was released from jail in June 1914. After his return his influence grew not only in Maharashtra but throughout the country. People in general looked up to him for taking up the leadership of the country. As for the moderates, their ranks were depleted as the years passed by. Gokhale was ailing and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya could not take up the leadership along moderate lines. Lajpatrai grew disgusted with the state of affairs in the country and during the war he was in America. Srinivasa Sastri always preferred to remain a back-bencher. S. P. (later Lord) Sinha was out of tune with the new spirit and had ceased to take any interest in politics even though he was to preside over the Bombay session of the Congress in 1915. Mehta had declined the Presidentship of the Congress in 1909 and was unequal to leading the country. Wacha, Subba Rao Pantulu and Mudholkar were always moderates and could not be expected to

lead the Congress. Surendranath Banerjea had had his innings; he was also not in tune with the new spirit. Gandhiji had just then arrived on the scene and was undergoing his Indian political apprenticeship.

The moderates were thus dwindling in numbers and importance; the leadership of the Congress was bound to go to those influenced by Tilak. Gokhale could foresee this. The choice before him was either to allow the Congress to die, or permit the extremists to come in with honour and dignity. Gokhale chose the latter course but appears to have changed his mind later, according to some. Let us survey the developments as they took place.

Mrs Besant had entered the political scene by that time and was desirous of bringing about unity in the Congress ranks. She, along with Mr Subba Rao Pantulu, went to Poona on December 7, 1914. Gokhale and Tilak, the leaders of the moderates and the extremists, were there. Staying in the Servants of India Society, she had talks with Gokhale and Tilak, and as a result of the talks the compromise formula given above was arrived at.

Mrs Besant thus succeeded in evolving a formula acceptable to both groups. She went back to Madras with a statement of Tilak and a resolution drafted by Gokhale. The Congress session was to be held there at the end of 1914. She thought that the way was clear and that unity was assured, but this was not yet to be.

It is not definitely known as to what happened between the departure of Mrs Besant and the writing of the letter by Mr Gokhale to Mr Bhupendranath Basu, the President-elect of the Madras session of the Congress. Mehta and Wacha are known to have expressed their disapproval of the resolution on the compromise.

Pherozeshah Mehta indeed sent his colleague, D. G. Dalvi, to Poona to convey his views to Gokhale. Dalvi could not meet Gokhale as he was not well and sent him a letter on December 1, 1914. He wrote, "With reference to the negotiations for a United Congress now in progress, Sir P. M. Mehta has requested me to communicate to you as follows: 'I know nothing of this matter. A big intrigue is going on and I would request Mr Gokhale not to be committed to any view in the matter, until such time when I shall have the opportunity of meeting him personally and talking over the matter'."

This letter shows that Mehta wanted the issue to be discussed between them before anything was settled. Gokhale might have thought that Mehta would not go to the extent of turning down what he had done. His faith was misplaced. Left to himself Gokhale would not have retraced the steps he had taken. But he did not desire to flout the opposition from Mehta whom he considered his leader. He wrote a confidential letter to Bhupendranath Basu. At the Congress session Basu referred to this letter but did not disclose the contents as it was confidential Basu, however, told the Congress on the strength of the letter that Tilak had openly avowed his intention of adopting the boycott of Government and other obstructionist methods if he entered the Congress. This came as a bombshell. Mrs Besant immediately sent a telegram to Tilak: "Moved amendment. Debate adjourned It is said by opponents you favour boycott of Government. I say you do not Wire which is truth. Reply prepaid" Tilak replied: "I have never advocated boycott of Government. Prominent nationalists have and are serving in Municipalities and Legislative Councils and I have fully supported their action both privately and publicly" This telegram was read out in the Subjects Committee of the Congress. Bhupendranath Basu expressed his regret repeatedly for having charged Tilak with being something that he was not; his main source of information had been Gokhale's letter. The result of this incident was

that the question of a compromise was left to a Committee which was to report to the Congress next year. In 1915, the session was held in Bombay and it passed a resolution suitably amending the Congress constitution so as to enable the extremists to rejoin the organization. It was in 1916 that the resolution came into force and that the extremists ultimately rejoined the Congress.

What were the actual contents of the controversial letter and what became of it ? The extremists would not rest till Gokhale's confidential letter to Basu was published. It was stated by Tilak in an article in *Kesari* that Mr Basu considered the letter very objectionable and so asked Gokhale to send another, mild in character, to be read before the Subjects Committee. Gokhale did not publish his letter but requested Tilak to see him, read the letter himself, or send some one enjoying his confidence to read it; if they still insisted on the publication of the letter, he was ready to do so. Tilak refused to comply with Gokhale's request and the controversy went on in the journals of Tilak and Gokhale for a pretty long time.

H. P. Mody, the biographer of P. M. Mehta, brought the letter to light. Here are the relevant contents. Gokhale wrote to Basu : "When Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and I and others urged at Calcutta three years ago that the right of electing delegates should be restored to public meetings, held under auspices which guaranteed the acceptance of Article 9 by those who took part in the meetings, we were under the impression that our extremist friends in the different Provinces had by that time seen the error of their ways and had come to realize that the only political work possible in the existing circumstances of the country was on the lines of the Congress, that they wanted quietly to return to the Congress fold but that considerations of self-respect stood in their way as they did not like to apply for election to those whom they considered to be their opponents; and that it was therefore desirable

so to relax the rigidity of our rules as to make them less humiliating to these countrymen of ours to rejoin the Congress. We were a so swayed in our attitude by the extreme desirability of taking an early opportunity to heal the breach in the public life that had resulted from the split of 1907, so that the rising generation of the country should not have to grow up under the baneful tradition of that breach. And this was really my view of the matter till last week and I was prepared to do what lay in my power to bring opinion round to it in the Congress, short, of course, of breaking with those whose lead I have followed or with whom I have worked all these years." The last sentence is very significant. Gokhale was not prepared to break with those whose lead he had followed; since there was going to be a break he preferred to break with the extremists and not with his leaders.

The latter part of the letter gave the reasons why the initial readiness for compromise disappeared. "Mr Tilak", Gokhale went on to say, "had told Mr Subba Rao frankly and in unequivocal terms that though he accepted the position laid down in what is known as the Congress creed, he did not believe in the present methods of the Congress, which rest on association with the Government where possible and opposition to it where necessary. In place of that he wanted to substitute the method of opposition to Government, pure and simple within constitutional limits— in other words a policy of Irish obstruction. We on our side are agitating for a larger and larger share in the Government of the country—in the legislative councils, on the municipal and local boards, in public services and so forth. Mr Tilak wants to address only one demand to the Government here and to the British public in England, *viz.*, for the concession of self-government to India and till that is conceded, he would urge his countrymen to have nothing to do with public services, or legislative councils, and local and municipal bodies."

We now give Gokhale's second letter to Mr Basu, the "mild one", which the latter had asked for. Gokhale wrote to him on December 25, 1914, "My position is briefly this : I am in favour of anything reasonable being done to bring back the seceders, provided they want to come back to co-operate with us in carrying out the present programme of the Congress by present methods. If, however, they want to revive the struggle of 1906-7, which terminated in the split at Surat, as Mr Tilak distinctly told Mr Subba Rao, I am firmly opposed to any changes that would facilitate their return."

Tilak for his part was offended because he was painted as being what he was not. He would have placed his views before the Congress and the delegates would have either accepted them or rejected them. He resented the fact that admission was refused to him for what he was considered likely to advocate. The compromise formula thus foundered on the rock of misunderstanding, obstinacy and old prejudices.

So the Madras session ended without any tangible results. The controversy was in full swing even after the session. The two sides were sorry for not being able to bridge the gulf. Tilak in a letter to Gokhale wrote that he did not want to come back into the Congress only to extol the eloquent speeches of the moderates. He had his own ideas and a go-ahead programme. Gokhale, too, was firm in the attitude that he had taken : he wanted re-entry of the other group so that it might co-operate in the programme that his group was pursuing.

It is well to clear a possible misunderstanding. Gokhale did not write his historical letter to Mr Basu of his own accord. Mr Basu had requested Gokhale to let him have his views on the point at issue then. Gokhale's letter did not contain any expression like "boycott of Government" which were attributed to Tilak. This was Mr Basu's own comment. Here is the

relevant portion of the letter written by Gokhale to Basu on January 21, 1915: "You certainly should not have referred to that letter at the Subjects Committee or given to the members what was regarded by them as its purport, especially as I had written to you, at your own instance, another letter which you could have read out and which was my own summary of my longer letter. However, having done this, I feel you should not have, the next day, on getting that telegram from Tilak, apologized to him in terms which seemed to imply that I had misled you. . ... The whole episode was regrettable and I feel I was treated by you with great unfairness, especially as my confidential letter had been written not of my own accord but in reply to a communication from you. Now in giving the purport of my letter to the members, you had used expressions like "boycott of Government" or any others of your own, not taken from my letter and if your apology was for the use of such expressions, I have nothing to say to that ....."

Mr Basu sent a reply to the letter on January 27, 1915. The purport of the reply was that the confidential letter sent by Gokhale on December 15 was public property when he reached Madras. He admitted that he had shown the letter to three persons, and not to Motilal Ghose. He said that he had a bad memory and did not remember to have referred to Gokhale by name. However, he admitted that the reference to the confidential letter was a mistake. If Mr Basu had handled the situation better the misunderstanding could have been cleared at Madras.

The Government was in the happiest position. Though the war was on, they were getting all the help and all the good wishes from the people No section preached the withholding of help. If both the groups had forgotten their old prejudices and had worked as a single party from the beginning, probably recent Indian history would have been different.

20

Last Days

THE END WAS fast approaching. Gokhale had already been warned in England that he had not long to live. He wished to labour in his native land till his death. He had once wanted to be a philosopher and he had developed equanimity and fortitude. He awaited death, as Rabindranath Tagore puts it in *Gitanjali*, like a bridegroom welcoming the bride. Gokhale had not taken to *dhyan* or *dhirana*: he was not a worshipper of God in symbols; he had not gone on pilgrimages. Yet he had developed a spiritual attitude towards day-to-day work which claimed his absorbed attention.

On February 13, 1915, when Gandhiji was entertained in the Society, Gokhale had become unconscious and could not attend the function. There was a slight rally and he went on with the work in hand. Up to the 17th he was drafting, dictating and correcting letters and documents of importance. He was anxious to finish the draft Constitution of India which he had agreed to give to Lord Willingdon. On Thursday, a day full of anxious moments, he wrote to several friends. On Friday morning his condition took a turn for the worse. By then he had finished the draft Constitution which he had written in pencil with a firm hand. This was his last great effort to serve India. For his work on the Public Service Commission, which also he had wanted to complete, could not be completed, to his great disappointment.

On Friday morning the shadow of death was over him. Dr Dev, a member of the Society, had given up hope of his survival and had called in two eminent doctors—V. C. Gokhale and Shikhare—for consultation. They, too, could not see any ray of hope. Gokhale was all the while conscious, and he was against more experts being called in. He did not want bulletins of his condition to be issued. He wanted a quiet death.

He called for his sister and daughters and told them to be calm and not shed tears. He told them about the arrangements that he had made for their future. He took a solemn leave of the members of the Society and talked to his personal staff, especially his cook. He asked Wamanrao Patwardhan, a member of the Society, to sit by his side and feelingly told him : "I have spoken harshly to you on many occasions. Forgive me." The disciple was overwhelmed; Gokhale asked him again whether he was forgiven. "Yes", was the only word that Patwardhan could manage to say. Dr Dev and H. N. Apte, the famous Marathi novelist and a close friend, were by his side. Gokhale told Apte that he had seen this side of life which was good; now he was going to see the other side.

Presently he felt that the hour had come. With his love of tidiness and orderliness, he had his *dhoti* and shirt arranged well. He expressed a desire to be placed on the deck chair that he always preferred. After a few moments he pointed his finger up towards the heavens. Then he folded his hands. The end came peacefully. It was 10-25 P. M. The stars were out, and it was a calm night. But it did not take long for the news to spread. There was profound grief in the city and in the country over the premature death of one of her great sons. Gokhale's great contemporary, Lokamanya Tilak, had gone to Sinhgad for rest as he himself was not keeping fit. A messenger was sent for his return.

There were scenes of grief on the Society's premises Fellow members and friends paid their last respects to the departed Servant of India. A big procession started, wending its way through the main parts of the city which wore a mournful appearance, amidst big crowds which had assembled throughout the route. Flowers were heaped on the bier. The procession reached the cremation ground at about noon. Tilak had arrived by that time. There were orations by Dr R. G. Bhandarkar, the noted Oriental scholar and social reformer, Dr R. P. Paranjpye, Principal of the Fergusson College, and by Tilak. Tilak's speech was full of feeling and appreciation. He said, "This is a time for shedding tears. This diamond of India, this jewel of Maharashtra, the prince of workers, is laid to eternal rest on the funeral ground. Look at him and try to emulate him. Everyone of you should look upon his life as a model to imitate and should try to fill the gap caused by his death. If you will do your level best to emulate him, he will feel glad even in the next world."*

Messages of condolence poured in from all over the world and meetings were held to express grief. Newspapers paid their tributes. Among the messages, there was one from His Majesty George V. The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, the Secretary of State, the Governors of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, the Lt. Governor of Burma, Their Highnesses the Nizam, the Gaekwad of Baroda, the Nawab of Rampur, the Maharajas of Banaras and of Bhavnagar, General Smuts, Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Lord Islington, Sir Ratan Tata, Dr Sapru and many more were among those who sent condolence messages. On March 3, a condolence meeting was held at Poona, presided over by the Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, when Gandhiji moved the main resolution. His Highness the Aga Khan was one of the speakers. In Bombay also the condolence meeting was presided over by the Governor.

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*Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of Indian National Congress*

Resolutions for raising a memorial to Gokhale were passed. The work conducted by Gokhale through the Servants of India Society was to be strengthened and perpetuated. That was going to be his real and lasting memorial. Gokhale's statues, portraits and several other visible memorials in all parts of India came to be unveiled or opened. Today, the Parliament of India has a marble bust of Gokhale in its library. Poona has its Gokhale Hall. The Gokhale School of Politics and Economics on the premises of the Servants of India Society is another enduring memorial. And the Society itself is there, active in the service of the country.

21

Some Reminiscences

WE ARE FORTUNATE in having several interesting references to Gokhale by some of his eminent contemporaries.

Mrs Sarojini Naidu wrote an article portraying 'Gokhale the Man'.* Poetess that she was, her praise of him is memorable. She said, "There was the outer man as the world knew and esteemed him, with his precise and brilliant and subtle intellect, his unrivalled gifts of political analysis and synthesis, his flawless and relentless mastery and use of the consummate logic of co-ordinated facts and figures, his courteous but inexorable candour in opposition, his patent dignity and courage in honourable compromise, the breadth and restraint, the vigour and veracity of his far-reaching statesmanship, the lofty simplicities and sacrifices of his daily life."

She also narrates a conversation with Gokhale at Calcutta where she had gone to attend the session of the Congress in 1911.

Gokhale asked, "What is your outlook for India ?" "One of hope", replied Sarojini Naidu. "What is your vision of the immediate future ?" "Hindu-Muslim unity in less than five years."

**The Bombay Chronicle*, March 9, 1915.

"Child," he said with a note of yearning sadness in his voice. "You are a poet; but you hope too much. It will not come in your life time or in mine. But keep your faith and work for it."

In March 1912, Gokhale met her in Bombay and asked her, "Does the flame still burn bright ?" "Brighter than ever," she replied, but Gokhale was not optimistic.

A session of the Muslim League was held at Lucknow and Sarojini Naidu attended it. At the session a new constitution was adopted "which sounded a key-note of loyal co-operation with the sister community in all matters of national welfare and progress". Sarojini Naidu thought that a new era had dawned in India. She thought that her dream was coming true. She went to Poona and immediately called on Gokhale. He was ailing and weak. "Ah", he cried with outstretched hands when he saw her, "have you come to tell me that your vision was true ?"—and he began to question her over and over again about the underlying spirit of the session.

She says, "His weary and pain-worn face lighted up with pleasure, when I assured him that so far as the younger men were concerned it was not an instinct of mere political expediency but one of genuine conviction that had prompted them to stretch out so frankly and generously the hands of good fellowship to the Hindus and I hoped that the coming Congress would respond to it with equal cordiality. 'So far as it lies in our power,' he replied, 'it shall be done.' After an hour or so I found him exhausted with the excitement of it all." Mrs Naidu met Gokhale again in the evening. She says. "I found a strangely transformed Gokhale, brisk and smiling, a little pale, but without a trace of the morning's languor and depression. 'What', I almost screamed as he was preparing to lead the way upstairs, 'surely you

cannot mean to mount all those steps ?' He laughed, 'You have put a new hope in me. I feel strong enough to face life, and work again'."

She adds : "Presently his sister and two charming daughters joined us for half an hour on the broad terrace with its peaceful view over sunset hills and valleys and we talked about pleasant and passing things. This was my first and only glimpse and realization of the personal, domestic side of this lonely and impersonal worker. After their departure we sat quietly in the gathering twilight till his golden voice, stirred by some deep emotion, broke the silence with golden words of counsel and admonition so grand, so solemn and so inspiring that they have never ceased to thrill me. He spoke of the unequalled happiness and privilege of service for India. 'Stand here with me,' he said. 'with the stars and hills as witnesses and in their presence, consecrate your life and your talent, your song and your speech, your thoughts and your dream to the motherland. Oh poet, see visions from the hilltops and spread abroad the message of hope to the toilers in the valleys.' As I took my leave of him, he said again to this humble messenger of tidings, 'You have given me new hope, new faith, new courage. Tonight I shall rest. I shall sleep with a heart at peace'."

Sarojini Naidu and Gokhale met in London two months later. She says : "Among the many friends who greeted me on my arrival was the familiar figure of Gokhale in wholly unfamiliar European garments and yes, actually in English top-hat. I stared at him for a moment. 'Where,' I asked him, 'is your rebellious turban ?' But I soon got accustomed to this new phase of my old friend, to a social Gokhale who attended parties, frequented theatres, played bridge, and entertained ladies at dinner on the terrace of the National Liberal Club.

Mrs Sarojini Naidu tells us, "Mr Gokhale had a great fancy for cherries and I always took care to provide a liberal supply whenever he was expected. 'Every man has his price', I would tease him, 'and yours is—cherries'."

We turn to another of Gokhale's contemporaries : Dr Tej Bahadur Sapru. Paying a tribute to the memory of Gokhale, he narrates an incident : "In 1907 Gokhale had undertaken a tour in northern India to explain the import of Congress resolutions. He went to Allahabad. On the day he made his first speech, he did not allow any one to call on him between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. as he had to prepare his speech. Although he had been in active public life for over twenty years, he thought it necessary to prepare his speech and he would not say whatever came to his lips on the spur of the moment. During the six hours, he was not merely pondering over the points of his speech, but even the language in which he wanted to clothe his thoughts. While proceeding to the lecture hall, he mentioned one of the points on which he wanted to concentrate. Later I heard his speech. I had never heard a more arresting speech before..... Every word that Gokhale uttered was, and is, important. Three or four years later, he came to Allahabad once again and I found him similarly absorbed in his work. The occasion then was the preparation of a paper for the Universal Races Congress. Read that paper even to-day, every word in it is precious. Its beauty will be spoilt even by adding one word to it, or taking out one from it. He spent a whole night previous to the day on which he moved his Primary Education Bill in meditating upon all aspects of the subject. He never overrated his pre-eminent political experience, his superb command over the English language, or his complete mastery over all details of the subject under consideration.....Barring one or two men, I can not think of a person so well informed and so well posted in the theoretical as well as practical aspects of Indian politics as Gokhale."

Here are revealing glimpses of Gokhale by Gandhiji : "To see Gokhale at work was as much a joy as an education. He never wasted a minute. His private relations and friendships were all for the public good. All his talks had reference only to the good of the country and were absolutely free from any trace of untruth or insincerity. India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and intense concern to him. Various people sought to interest him in different things. But he gave to everyone of them the same reply. 'You do the thing yourself. Let me do my work. What I want is freedom for my country. After that is won we can think of other things. Today that one thing is enough to engage all my time and energy."*

"Gokhale arrived in South Africa while we were still living on a Farm..... There was no cot on the Farm, but we borrowed one for Gokhale. There was no room where he could enjoy full privacy. For sitting accommodation, we had nothing beyond the benches in our school. Even so, how could we resist the temptation of bringing Gokhale in spite of his delicate health to the Farm ? And how could he help seeing it, either ? I was foolish enough to imagine that Gokhale would be able to put up with a night's discomfort and to walk about a mile and a half from the station to the Farm. I had asked him beforehand and he had agreed on it, thanks to his simplicity and overwhelming confidence in me. It rained that day, as fate would have it, and I was not in a position suddenly to make any special arrangement I have never forgotten the trouble to which I put Gokhale that day in my ignorant affection. The hardship was too much for him to bear and he caught a chill .....I prepared special soup and Kotval (Bhaisaheb of Indore) special bread for him, but these could not be taken to him hot. We managed as best as we could. Gokhale uttered not a syllable, but I understood

* *Autobiography*, pp 292-293.

from his face what a folly I had committed. When Gokhale came to know that all of us slept on the floor, he removed the cot which had been brought for him and had his own bed too spread on the floor. This whole night was a night of repentance for me. Gokhale had a rule in life which seemed to me a bad rule. He would not permit anyone except a servant to wait on him. He had no servant during the tour. Mr Kallenbach and I entreated him to let us massage his feet. But he would not even let us touch him ....."*

Gandhiji called Gokhale a "Mahatma". According to him, Gokhale's last will and testament was as follows : "While on his deathbed, the Mahatma had declared his ideal. He had said that his soul would not enjoy peace if after his death his biography was written or a memorial raised to him or meetings were held to express sorrow at his passing away from this world. His only desire was that India should lead the life he had led and that the Servants of India Society founded by him progressed and prospered in its mission of service to the nation."

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gives us an interesting incident in Gokhale's life :** "I visited, as a delegate, the Bankipore Congress during Christmas 1912. It was very much an English-knowing upper class affair where morning coats and well-pressed trousers were greatly in evidence. Essentially it was a social gathering with no political excitement or tension. Gokhale, fresh from South Africa, attended it and was the outstanding person of the session. High-strung, full of earnestness and a nervous energy, he seemed to be one of the few persons present who took politics and public affairs seriously and felt deeply about them. I was impressed by him.

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* *Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 248-249.
** *An Autobiography* (1962 edition), pp. 27-28.

"A characteristic incident occurred when Gokhale was leaving Bankipore. He was a member of the Public Service Commission at the time and, as such, was entitled to a first class railway compartment to himself. He was not well, and crowds and uncongenial company upset him. He liked to be left alone by himself, and, after the strain of the Congress session, he was looking forward to a quiet journey by train. He got his compartment but the rest of the train was crowded with delegates returning to Calcutta. After a little while, Bhupendranath Basu, who later became a member of the India Council, came up to Gokhale and casually asked him if he could travel in his compartment. Mr Gokhale was a little taken aback as Mr Basu was an aggressive talker, but naturally he agreed. A few minutes later Mr Basu again came up to Gokhale and asked him if he would mind if a friend of his also travelled in the same compartment. Mr Gokhale again mildly agreed. A little before the train left, Mr Basu mentioned casually that both he and his friend would find it very uncomfortable to sleep in the upper berths, so would Gokhale mind occupying an upper berth, so that the two lower berths might be taken by them ? And that, I think, was the arrangement arrived at and poor Mr Gokhale had to climb up and spend a bad night."

Pandit Nehru also says *that he "was attracted in those early years to Mr Gokhale's Servants of India Society. I never thought of joining it, partly because its politics were too moderate for me and partly because I had no intention then of giving up my profession. But I had a great admiration for the members of the Society, who had devoted themselves for a bare pittance to the country's service. Here at least, I thought, was straight and single-minded and continuous work even though this might not be on wholly right lines."

**Ibid* p. 30.

Dr Rajendra Prasad has recorded his first meeting with Gokhale. It was in 1910 at Calcutta that a barrister friend told him that Gokhale wanted to see him. Dr Rajendra Prasad wondered how his name was known to Gokhale and why he was called for. His friend told him that Gokhale was desirous of contacting some promising young men from Bihar and that he himself had suggested Rajendra Prasad's name in that connection.

Both of them went to see Gokhale. Gokhale told them, "It is possible that you may do well in the legal profession, amass wealth and lead a life of plenty and luxury." "But remember", he intoned raising his index finger, "the country has also a claim on its young men. And since you have had a nice record, the claim on you as such is all the stronger."

"Then touching a personal note he observed, 'I come of a poor family. My people had great hopes that after completing my education, I would earn a lot and be able to make them all happy. When, throwing cold water over all their hopes, I dedicated my life to the country's service, my brother felt so annoyed that, for some time, he did not even talk to me. But soon after, when he as well as others in my family realized what my work meant, they began to love me as before. May be, you are similarly circumstanced, but be sure that eventually all your people will worship you. They have many hopes in you. but suppose you die, will they not adjust themselves to it somehow ?' He spoke in this strain for nearly two hours. His words, uttered with soul-deep sincerity, made a deep impression on me .. We then left his place, lost in thought and speechless .. I could not relish my food and spent sleepless nights .. I was the father of two sons and my brother had four children . .. "

Dr Rajendra Prasad adds how he, his brother and sister,

all wept and how ultimately all enthusiasm was killed in him. The only result of the interview was that though the idea of joining the Servants of India Society was given up, he did not feel like appearing for the B. L. examination and the result was that he could not score high marks and just passed it.+

Gandhiji, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr Rajendra Prasad —all the great leaders in India were attracted by the idea of joining the Society, but none of them could, or did join it.

Was Gokhale a theist or an atheist ? Gandhiji says, "A man who leads a dedicated life, who is simple in habits, who is the very image of truth, who is full of humanity, who calls nothing his own—such a man is a man of religion, whether he himself is conscious of it or not." Gokhale's friends and associates tell us that he never blindly accepted any religious dogma. He did not observe the customary rites, fasts and feasts. Even his sacred thread was one day discarded by him. But his was a deeply spiritual nature and the object of his reverence was his country.

Mr K. Natarajan in a speech at Poona in 1929 said : "As for religion, although he had the reputation of being an agnostic in his early days, his views had undergone considerable change in later years. Gokhale took me to his study at Calcutta, and while there I picked up a glass paper weight..... and my eyes were arrested by the inscription on it in bold letters 'God is love'. I broke into an interjection of surprise, whereupon Mr Gokhale said that that was what he had come to believe."

Interesting events and references bringing out other aspects of Gokhale's nature are not lacking. Here are some :—

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*Dr Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, pp. 65-67.

Tilak was prosecuted and convicted in 1908. Gokhale was in England then. The Surat split was in the background. Some newspapers in India alleged that Gokhale was instrumental in bringing pressure on Morley for putting Tilak behind the bars. That this was a story concocted to vilify Gokhale will be apparent if we see that Morley wrote to Minto on July 3, 1908, "By the way, I don't count among welcome things the proceedings against Tilak ..... Since writing to you an hour ago I have come across the article in *Kesari* . . ..I confess at the first glance I feel as if it might have been passed over."

On July 31, Morley held the same view and on August 7 he wrote in the same strain. Morley was not responsible for launching the prosecution; indeed he did not favour it but yielded to the judgment of "the men on the spot". If Gokhale had influenced Morley to go in fo the prosecution, there would have been some indication in his letters to Lord Minto.

Let us pass to what Gokhale wrote to his friends in India in the matter. On July 17, 1908, he wrote, "We shall all heartily rejoice if he is acquitted. I think his prosecution has been a fearful mistake."

On July 23, he wrote, "This morning's papers contain telegrams about the shocking sentence inflicted on Mr Tilak. There is, of course, no doubt that he will be brought back and set free after things quiet down. Still, the conviction and sentence will really be a great blow to our Party, for part of the resentment against the Government is likely to be directed against us also."

On August 13, he wrote, "If things are quiet in India, he will be brought back and set free. You may rest assured that I will do all that I possibly can in the matter, though I don't like to say so, for it might be misunderstood by our extremist friends."

But Gokhale's detractors continued to assert that he was at the bottom of Tilak's prosecution. Would he sue the vilifiers for defamation ? His guru, Ranade, had taught him to be generous even to his enemies. If he kept silent there was the possibility of the misunderstanding deepening. He decided that if not for himself, at least for the cause, he should proceed against the newspapers concerned. *Hindu Punch* of Thana was one, and *Bandemataram* of Calcutta another. He was ready to compromise if the papers gave donation to certain public institutions such as 'The Depressed Class Mission' of Mr Shinde and the 'Widows' Home' of Mr Karve. But the suggestion was not accepted. Ultimately prosecutions were launched and Gokhale had to give evidence. The newspapers were fined. But Gokhale was not at ease even though he had secured justice. The editor of *Hindu Punch* was a poor man and he was ruined. Gokhale was so magnanimous that he invited him and asked him about his financial position. Gokhale promised to pay him Rs. 30/- a month till the end of his life on learning that he was bankrupt. The poor man did not live long to enjoy this generous gesture.

It is interesting to note that, as mentioned by Srinivasa Sastri, Gokhale kept no diary : ' I must tell you, parenthetically, that he never maintained a diary. He asked us, his followers, too, never to do so. Do you know why ? Just at the time when the Society was started the whole of India was in a political ferment and a part of the activities of the Government was the institution of enquiries of all sorts into the conduct of young men. In many political prosecutions, the diaries of the unhappy accused had been taken as evidence against them. So he told us, 'Though you will be perfectly innocent, something you write, may bring, it may be, other public workers in jeopardy. Well, we cannot afford to keep diaries'."

Gokhale was once travelling in a first class compartment. An English army officer entered the compartment and threw Gokhale's luggage out on the platform. The army officer was informed by somebody that he had behaved rudely towards an Indian who was a very important person and a member of the Imperial Legislature. The officer restored the luggage to the compartment and apologized to Gokhale who accepted the apology; and the whole incident was over. But a friend of Gokhale reported the matter to Lord Curzon. Curzon was furious and wanted to punish the army officer, if Gokhale would let him know his name. Gokhale felt that that would be to go too far after the tendering of an apology. Gokhale informed Lord Curzon that the officer's punishment was no remedy. He went to the root of the matter : the sense of racial superiority and arrogance, he felt, must go.

Gokhale's daughter, Mrs Kashibai Dhavale, in a broadcast in May 1956, gave us an intimate account of her father. She said : "My father was so busy with public affairs that he almost became a guest in his own house and a rare one ..... Once we had to wait for a long time, owing to the unending stream of visitors, and had to go away without seeing him. I heard later that he had passed a sleepless night on that account, which had already cost me not a few tears.

"His remarks were very striking : 'Whatever you do, do it thoroughly. If you want to be a donkey, aim at becoming a first-class donkey'."

About his memory his daughter said. "Once while travelling in Ireland, he surprised his fellow-travellers by repeating the names of the railway stations backwards and forwards after a mere glance at the time-table."

We may go over some little known facts about Gokhale. He once wanted to learn Latin. He brought some textbooks

for studying it, but soon gave it up. As he was in Calcutta for a fairly long time he learnt Bengali tolerably well. Some of his friends suggested to him that he should go in for music. Gokhale agreed and placed an order for musical instruments immediately. He requested a renowned artiste to give him lessons in the art. After a few days the artiste told Gokhale that he would not be a singer even if he spent his whole life time in learning it. Gokhale wanted to practise yoga also. He took yogic lessons at the residence of one Mr Iyengar. Though he had kept his yogic studies as a closely guarded secret, his friends came to know it. Gokhale was a poor student in this branch of study, too, and gave up the attempt soon. Gokhale, we may add, was also interested in astrology.

Honours interested him little. Although he had accepted the C I.E., he declined the knighthood. Lord Hardinge recommended that K.C.I.E. be conferred on him and even the King agreed to the proposal; but Gokhale, who was then in England, begged to be excused. His refusal was based largely, though not wholly, on personal grounds.

IMPORTANT DATES IN GOKHALE'S LIFE

1866	May 9. Born at Kotluk, Ratnagiri District.
1879	Death of his father.
1880	Married.
1881	Matriculated.
1882-84	College education.
	Took the B.A. Degree.
	Joined Law Class.
	Formation of the Deccan Education Society.
1885	Founding of the Fergusson College.
	Assistant Master, New English School.
1886	Life Member of the Deccan Education Society.
1887	Married second time.
	First meeting with M. G. Ranade.
1888	Edited English section of the *Sudharak*.
	Elected Hon. Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and editor of its quarterly.
1889	Took part in the Indian National Congress held at Bombay.
1891	Secretary of the Deccan Education Society.
1893	Death of his mother.
	Collected funds for the Deccan Education Society.
1895	Joint Secretary of the Indian National Congress.
	Fellow of Bombay University.
	Editor of the *Rashtra Sabha Samachar*.
1896	Resigned Secretaryship of Sarvajanik Sabha and editorship of its quarterly.
	Organization of the Deccan Sabha.
	First meeting with Gandhiji.

1897	First visit to England. Evidence before the Welby Commission. Published in England complaints on the plague measures in Poona. First meeting with John Morley. Return from England. Apology incident.
1898	Took prominent part in plague relief work.
1899	Elected Member of the Bombay Legislative Council. Criticized famine relief measures of Government.
1901	Opposed Land Alienation Bill. Walkout from the Legislative Council. Opposed introduction of communal principle in the District Municipalities Bill. Supported temperance movement. Death of Ranade.
1902	Retired from the Fergusson College. Elected to the Imperial Legislative Council. Delivered the first of his Budget speeches.
1903	Gandhiji stayed a month with Gokhale in Calcutta.
1904	Received title of C.I.E.
1905	Founded the Servants of India Society, June 12. Second visit to England. Presided over the Benares session of the Indian, National Congress. President of the Poona City Municipality.
1906	Third visit to England.
1907	Death of his brother. Deportation of Lala Lajpatrai. Undertook lecturing tour in northern India. Congress split at Surat.
1908	Evidence before the Decentralization Commission. Fourth visit to England. Announcement of the Morley-Minto Reforms. Arrest and imprisonment of Tilak.

Defamation suit against the *Hindu Punch*.
Founded the Ranade Economic Institute.

1910 Moved a resolution on indentured labour of Natal (adopted).
Moved a resolution on Elementary Education (withdrawn).
Criticized the Press Bill.

1911 Introduced the Elementary Education Bill.
Opposed the Seditious Meetings Bill.
Contributed a paper on "East and West" to the Universal Races Congress.

1912 Spoke on the resolution of Bhupendranath Basu on Police Administration in India.
Moved a resolution on indentured labour.
Defeat of the Elementary Education Bill.
Fifth visit to England.
Visit to South Africa. Meeting with Gandhiji.
Appointed to the Public Service Commission.

1913 Sixth visit to England (with the Public Service Commission).
Raised funds for the South African struggle.

1914 Seventh visit to England (with the Public Service Commission).
Declined offer of K.C I.E.
Gandhi-Smuts agreement.
Met Gandhiji in London.
Congress compromise, its failure.

1915 Congress compromise controversy.
Visit of Gandhiji.
"Political Will and Testament."
Death, February 19.

(Based on the 'Chronology of Events' given in Mr Srinivasa Sastri's 'Life of Gopal Krishna Gokhale').

Appendix I

GOKHALE—AS OTHERS SAW HIM

Gokhale did not write an autobiography, and he did not even want a biography of himself written after his death. He was not known to have spoken much about himself. He would have thought it immodest to have done so. Fortunately for us, however, some of his great contemporaries have given us sketches and estimates of Gokhale which enable us to have a rounded portrait of him.

How did he strike the greatest of them all, Gandhiji, who used to call himself a disciple of Gokhale? Writing on the affinity that existed between them and the reasons for it, Gandhiji said : "Mr Gokhale taught me that the dream of every Indian, who claims to love his country, should be not to glorify in language but to spiritualize the political life of the country. He inspired my life and is still inspiring it; and in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualize myself. I have dedicated myself to that ideal. What is the meaning of spiritualizing the political life of the country ? What is the meaning of spiritualizing myself ? That question has come before me often and to you it may seem one thing, to me it may seem another thing. I think that political life must be an echo of private life and that there cannot be any divorce between the two."

Gandhiji gives us further glimpses of his guru : "I was by the side of that saintly politician [Gokhale] to the end of his life and I found no ego in him. If he wanted to shine in the political field of the country, he did so not in order that he might gain. He developed every particular faculty in him, not in order to win the praise of the world for himself

but in order that his country might gain. He did not seek public applause, but it was showered upon him, it was thrust upon him."*

"There was one thing Gokhale said to me, 'We lack in India character; we want religious zeal in the political field." Shall we then follow the spirit of the master with the same thoroughness and the same religious zeal, so that we can safely teach a child politics ?"**

We turn to another great contemporary of Gokhale : Tilak differed from him in political method; yet he thought highly of his personal qualities, a regard reciprocated by Gokhale. Tilak once described Gokhale as a very simple, child-like person, believing easily in what others said and almost taking the goodness of others for granted.

After Gokhale's death Tilak said in an article in *Kesari* on February 23, 1915 :

> "Gokhale had many virtues in him. The chief amongst them was his complete dedication at a very young age to the service of the country, with selfless devotion. There are persons who, after fully enjoying life at a young age, turn their attention to public service, for want of any other work. Their mental energies are dried up and their physical capacities are slowly ebbing out. For such persons one cannot have a very high regard. But at a time when all the physical powers are in full bloom, when the body is capable of undergoing all exertions in pursuit of self, when old age is at a distance, when the aspect of happiness

**Bangalore speech, 1915, on unveiling of Gokhale's statue

*Speeches and Writings, III ed., p. 246

in life is still attractive and when the tendency of being drawn in that direction is natural, if at such a time, especially when one is inwardly sure that the possibilities of his success in life are comparatively greater, a person diverts his attention from those alluring aspects and prepares himself for the service of the country, fully conscious of the dangers involved therein, and becomes ready to derive pleasure from such service, not minding the continuous labours, it all shows his strong control over himself. A person who not only exhibited that control, but practised it till the end of life, is really praiseworthy. Everyone is to be judged by the motives by which he is actuated. Gokhale was mild by nature and his natural tendency was to carry out his task by mild methods. To persons like us, these methods appeared to be unsuited. Even though two physicians had differed regarding the strict observance of treatment and the regimen, yet we acknowledge the worth of Gokhale as a physician."

The Aga Khan : "Gokhale was more than a statesman. He was essentially a creative artist of genius. His oratory was a work of art in words; but he was not only an artist in words but an artist in works and conceptions, and, like every great artist, he did not disdain in the search for his material to go wherever he could find it. He was not only broad-minded but charitable. His sense of human solidarity made him full of personal sympathy, not only to his opponents but to the selfish and the snobbish self-seekers. But his wrath and contempt were reserved for the poisonous and deadly vice of hypocrisy."

M. A. Jinnah : "Gokhale was a fearless critic and opponent of the measures of the Government and the administration of the country but in all his actions and utterances, he was guided by reason and true moderation. Thus he was a help to

the Government and a source of great strength and support to the cause of the people. One of the greatest lessons that his life and work teach one is the example of what one single individual can achieve, how powerfully and materially he can help and guide the destinies of his country and his people and from whom millions can derive true lead and inspiration."

M. Visvesvaraya : "I had known Mr Gokhale for 25 years as one who placed healthy and decisive limitations on ambition. He had a balanced intellect and studied both sides of the subject too well to take extreme views . Latterly Gokhale had acquired an international reputation. Indians in every country were proud to point to him as an example of their countrymen who could rise to the level of the best in any country."

Pandit Motilal Nehru : "Gokhale was a noble soul fired by a patriotism all consuming. A born leader of men, he never aspired to anything but to be the humblest servant of the motherland in whose service he brought such devotion into play that it is now a matter of history. He lived up to the very ideal which he set before himself and his countrymen."

V. S. Srinivasa Sastri : "In Mr Gokhale's character there was a great element of reverence and gratitude to those that taught him, nothing but admiration for those who had done great things and undergone great trials for the sake of the country..... It was marvellous how, even when he became a great man himself, he spoke in terms of the utmost humility, when he spoke of Ranade or Joshi or a person like P. M. Mehta. Even when we discussed the person who assailed him continually and against whom he frequently defended himself, Mr Tilak, he would not allow anyone of us to speak disparagingly of him. He would always say, 'Tilak might have his faults. I have many accounts to settle with him. But who are you ?

You are nowhere near him. He is a great man. His natural endowments are first-rate. He has improved them for the service of the country. Although I do not approve of his methods, I never question his motives. Believe me, there is no man who has spent so much for the country, there is no man who has had in his life to contend against the powerful opposition of the Government so much as Tilak; there is no man who has shown grit and patience and courage so rare that several times in the course of these struggles he lost his fortune and by his indomitable will put it all together again ."

Lord Curzon : "In fact he was the Leader of the Opposition and in that capacity I had often to suffer from the weight of Mr Gokhale's blows .. I have never met a man of any nationality more gifted with parliamentary capacities. Mr Gokhale would have obtained a position of distinction in any Parliament in the world, even in the British House of Commons. Widely as we differed, I never failed to recognize either his ability or his high character."

Lord Hardinge : "He was the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, really a good orator and debater, a statesman and a man for whom I had the highest respect. I have always regarded him not merely as an important member of any council but also as an friend."

E. S. Montagu : "It is not too much to say that his annual contribution to the debate on the Budget proposals in India was one of the outstanding features of the proceedings of the Viceroy's Council and was eagerly awaited even by those who could not see eye to eye with him in his criticisms That a man should interest himself in the complexities of Indian economics and finance is in itself a tribute to his powers of mind, that he should master them and should display his mastery at an age at which few people would care even to study them cursorily was a sign of ripening intellect and a serious endea-

vour which served to lay the sure foundations of Gokhale's work. And with all his comprehensiveness of judgment and mental clarity he never dropped into the academic fallacy of contempt. He impressed one as being among the most candid and unassuming of men, and he was equally ready to give or take advice where it seemed most serviceable. His mind possessed the qualities ascribed to statesmanship, without ever losing the fire of its enthusiasms or its warm human interests."

Ramsay MacDonald : "In him India had a faithful and devoted son. He belonged to that race of Indians who retained that calm dignity of mind and spirit which comes from an unassailable belief in their own race and its destiny.

"He knew the West, its powers and its kingdoms. No one paid a more whole-hearted homage to its attainments. But he knew the East too. The breath of the life of Mother India was his own breath of life. Jealously he guarded her reputation, faithfully he strove to remove her defects. Where she had fallen, he sought to uplift her; where she had triumphed he sought to praise her.

"I have sat for many days with him on the Royal Commission His knowledge, his resource, his nimbleness, his persistence, his authority, have been a source of endless wonder to me."

Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson : "Gokhale always reminds me of Mr Gladstone, possessing in my opinion much of the greatness and many of the weaknesses of that statesman."

H. W. Nevinson : "Certainly Gokhale was a Congressman . But in him there was nothing of the froth and fume of the legendary Congresswallah. If eloquence is, as Lord Curzon eloquently assured a Calcutta audience, the besetting sin of

Indians, Gokhale had none of it. He had no rhetoric. He cared nothing for impassioned language and magnificent periods. I have never heard a calmer or more self-restrained speaker. His was the eloquence of perfect knowledge, of entire devotion to his cause and utter disregard of self or any other consideration. But however quiet his speech, the courage of unyielding conviction and that regardlessness of sel for fortune or applause was always felt behind it...Courage underlying a sweet reasonableness was the characteristic of the man and his speaking. It made him a speaker of singular attraction and lucidity. But he was never satisfied with words. He knew that speeches accomplish nothing unless action follows and with the knowledge he founded the 'Servants of India Society'. Courage, self-assertion and discipline in public life were the qualities he found wanting and which he hoped to develop through the Congress and such missionary means as his order of the 'Servants of India Society'. He knew it would be slow work."

Appendix II

EXTRACTS FROM THE FAREWELL ADDRESS TO FERGUSSON COLLEGE

On September 19, 1902, the students of Fergusson College presented Mr Gokhale with a farewell address to which he replied as follows :

Mr Principal, Brother-Professors and Students of the College. it is not possible for me to rise without deep emotion to reply to the address which has just been read and to return thanks for the great, the overwhelming kindness with which you have treated me today. All parting in life is sad, but where the heart's deepest feelings are involved, the severance of old ties, and the necessity of saying good-bye, is about as trying an ordeal as any that a man can be called upon to go through. For eighteen years now, I have tried, according to the humble measure of my capacity, to give the best that was in me to this Society. Through good report and through evil report, through sunshine and through storm, it has been my endeavour to work for this institution with a single aim to its welfare, till at last it has become impossible for me to think of myself as apart from this College. And now, when the time for my withdrawing myself from all active work in this institution has come, my heart is naturally stirred by conflicting emotions, in which a feeling of intense thankfulness is mingled with a feeling of deep sadness. I feel thankful, profoundly thankful, that it has pleased Providence to give it to me to discharge the solemn and onerous obligations of a vow taken so many years ago under the influence of youthful enthusiasm, and that no matter what happens to me in the future, I shall always be able to look back with pleasure and pride on this

part of my career, and say to myself, "Thank God, I was permitted to fulfil my pledge." But, gentlemen, side by side with this feeling of thankfulness, there is a feeling of deep regret, that my active work for this great institution is now at an end You can easily understand what a wrench it must be to me to thus tear myself away from an institution to which my best work hitherto has been given, and which always has been first in my thoughts and affections, no matter in how many fields it was my lot to work.

* * * *

Public life in this country has few rewards and many trials and discouragements. The prospect of work to be done is vast, and no one can say what is on the other side—how all this work may end. But one thing is clear Those who feel in the matter as I do must devote themselves to the work in a spirit of hope and faith and seek only the satisfaction which comes of all disinterested exertions.

This is not the place where I may speak of my future hopes or lines of work. But one thing I know, and it is this : whether I am permitted to press onwards and prove of some little use to the public in another capacity, or whether I have to return a weather-beaten, tempest-lost, ship-wrecked mariner, my thoughts, as you have said in your address, will constantly be with this institution; and, on the other hand, I shall always be sure of a warm and hospitable welcome within these walls, whenever I choose to come here.

And, now, before concluding I wish to say one thing to the students of this College. I hope and trust that they will always be proud of this institution. I am about to leave you and so I can speak on this subject now with less reserve. I have been nearly all over India and I have naturally felt special interest in the educational institutions of different places. Nowwhere throughout the country is there an institu-

tion like this college of ours. There are other institutions better equipped, and also with older traditions; but the self-sacrifice of men like my friends, Mr Paranjpye and Mr Rajwade, surrounds this College with a halo of glory all its own. The principal moral interest of this institution is in the fact that it represents an idea and embodies an ideal. The idea is that Indians of the present day can bind themselves together, and putting aside all thoughts of worldly interests work for a secular purpose with a zeal and enthusiasm which we generally find in the sphere of religion alone. The ideal is the ideal of self-help, that we may learn slowly but steadily to rely less and less upon others, however willing to bear our burdens, and more and more upon ourselves.

I trust that you, the students of this College, will keep this character of the institution steadily before your eyes—that your devotion to it, your enthusiasm for it, will be commensurate with the nobility and importance of its work, that even when you feel disposed to criticize it, you will speak of it with the loving solicitude with which we mention a parent's faults, and that you will always do what lies in your power to further its interests and enlarge the sphere of its usefulness and influence.

* * * *

In leaving you, as I am doing, I feel I am leaving the best work of my life behind me. I trust I may meet some of you hereafter as co-workers in other fields, that we may also occasionally meet within the walls of this College. God bless this College and bless you all.

Appendix III

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

For some time past, the conviction has been forcing itself on many earnest and thoughtful minds that a stage has been reached in the work of nation-building in India when, for further progress, the devoted labours of a specially trained agency, applying itself to the task in a true missionary spirit, are required. The work that has been accomplished so far has indeed been of the highest value. The growth during the last fifty years of a feeling of common nationality, based upon common traditions and ties, common hopes and aspirations, and even common disabilities, has been most striking. The fact that we are Indians first and Hindus, Mahomedans, Parsees or Christians afterwards, is being realized in a steadily increasing measure, and the idea of a united and renovated India, marching onwards to a place among the nations of the world worthy of her great past, is no longer a mere idle dream of a few imaginative minds, but is the definitely accepted creed of those who form the brain of the community—the educated classes of the country. A creditable beginning has already been made in matters of education and of local self-government; and all classes of the people are slowly but steadily coming under the influence of liberal ideas. The claims of public life are every day receiving wider recognition, and attachment to the land of our birth is growing into a strong and deeply cherished passion of the heart. The annual meetings of Congresses and Conferences, the work of public bodies and associations, the writings in the columns of the Indian Press—all bear witness to the new life that is coursing in the veins of the people. The results achie-

ved so far are undoubtedly most gratifying, but they only mean that the jungle has been cleared and the foundations laid. The great work of rearing the superstructure has yet to be taken in hand and the situation demands on the part of workers devotion and sacrifices proportionate to the magnitude of the task.

The Servants of India Society has been established to meet in some measure these requirements of the situation. Its members frankly accept the British connection as ordained, in the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, for India's good. Self-Government within the Empire for their country and a higher life generally for their countrymen is their goal. This goal, they recognize, cannot be attained without years of earnest and patient efforts and sacrifices worthy of the cause. Much of the work must be directed towards building up in the country a higher type of character and capacity than is generally available at present, and the advance can only be slow. Moreover, the path is beset with great difficulties; there will be constant temptations to turn back; bitter disappointments will repeatedly try the faith of those who have put their hand to the work. But the weary toil can have but one end, if only the workers grow not faint-hearted on the way. One essential condition of success in this work is that a sufficient number of our countrymen must now come forward to devote themselves to the cause in the spirit in which religious work is undertaken.

Public life must be spiritualized. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the motherland, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence which nothing can shake—equipped with these, the worker must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes

of spending oneself in the service of one's country.

* * * *

The Servants of India Society will train men prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, and will seek to promote, by all constitutional means, the national interests of the Indian people. Its members will direct their efforts principally towards: (1) creating among the people, by example and by precept, a deep and passionate love of the motherland, seeking its highest fulfilment in service and sacrifice; (2) organizing the work of political education and agitation, basing it on a careful study of public questions, and strengthening generally the public life of the country; (3) promoting relations of cordial goodwill and co-operation among the different communities; (4) assisting educational movements, especially those for the education of women, the education of backward classes and industrial and scientific education; (5) helping forward the industrial development of the country; and, (6) the elevation of the depressed classes. The headquarters of the Society will be at Poona, where it will maintain a Home for its members, and attached to it, a Library for the study of subjects bearing on its work.

Appendix IV

SOME MEMORABALE SAYINGS OF GOKHALE

Swadeshi

Every year between 30 and 40 crores of rupees go out of India never to come back. No country—not even the richest in the world—can stand such bleeding.

Separate electorates

Undoubtedly this is a pernicious doctrine—that any community in India should abstract itself from the g neral nationality and for election purposes consider itself a separate unit. This will impede the growth of nationalist sense in the country.

The Indian problem in South Africa

I pray to God that such a struggle as you found necessary to wage in the Transvaal during the last three years may not have to be waged again. But if it has to be resumed, or if you have to enter struggles of a like nature for justice denied or injustice forced on you, remember that the issue will largely turn on the character you show, on your capacity for combined action, on your readiness to suffer and sacrific in a just cause. India will no doubt be behind you But the main endeavour to have your wrongs righted will have to be yours. Remember that you are entitled to have the Indian problem in this country solved on right lines. And in such right solution are involved not merely your pr sent worldly interests but your dignity and self-respect, the honour and good name of your Motherland, and the entire moral and material well-being of your children's children.

(Farewell speech in Pretoria, November 15, 1912)

The Depressed Classes

The elevation of the depressed classes who have to be brought up to the level of the rest of our people, universal elementary education, co-operation, improvement of the women, spread of industrial and technical education, and building up of the industrial strength of the country, promotion of close relations between different communities—these are some of the tasks that lie in front of us, and each needs a whole army of devoted missionaries. Shall the need go unsupplied ? Out of the thousands of young men that leave our Universities year after year, shall not a few hear within them the voices that speak to the spirit, and respond gladly to this call? The work is the work of our country. It is also the work of humanity. If, after all the awakening of which we speak and over which we justly rejoice, these fields do not yield their harvests for want of workers, India must wait for another generation before she receives faithful service from her children.

(*Speech before the Students' Brotherhood, Bombay, October* 9, 1919)

The consequences of inequality among men

The humblest Englishman in the country goes about with the prestige of the whole Empire behind him whereas the proudest and most distinguished Indian cannot shake off from himself a certain sense that he belongs to a subject race. The soul of social friendship is mutual appreciation and respect, which ordinarily is not found to co-exist with a consciousness of inequality.

(*From paper read before the Universal Races Congress London, July*, 1911)

Appendix V

GOKHALE'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

It is well to remember that this was only a draft proposal by Mr Gokhale made by him a few months after the outbreak of World War I. This fact was communicated to the press by the late Rt. Hon. Mr V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, successor to Mr Gokhale as President of the Servants of India Society.

The grant of Provincial Autonomy foreshadowed in the Delhi despatch would be a fitting concession to make to the people of India at the close of the war This will involve the twofold operation of freeing the Provincial Governments on one side from the greater part of the control which is at present exercised over them by the Government of India and the Secretary of State in connection with the internal administration of the country and substituting on the other, in place of the control so removed, the control of the representatives of the tax-payers through Provincial Legislative Councils. I indicate below in brief outline the form of administration that should be set up in different Provinces to carry out this idea.

Each Province should have :

1. A Governor appointed from England at the head of the administration.

2. A Cabinet or Executive Council of six members, three of whom should be Indians and three Englishmen with the following portfolios;

(a) Home (including Law and Justice); (b) Finance; (c) Agriculture, Irrigation and Public Works; (d) Education; (e) Local Self-Government (including Sanitation and Medical Relief); and (f) Industries and Commerce.

While members of the Indian Civil Service should be eligible for appointment to the Executive Council, no place in the Council should be reserved for them, the best man available taken, both English and Indian.

3. A Legislative Council of between 75 and 100 members, of whom not less than four-fifth should be elected by different constituencies and interests Thus in the Bombay Presidency, roughly speaking. each District should return two members, one representing Municipalities and the other District and Taluk Boards The City of Bombay should have about ten members allotted to it. Bodies in the *mofussil* like the Karachi Chamber, Ahmedabad millowners, Deccan Sardars shou d have a member each. Then there would be the special representation of Mahomedans and here and there a member may have to be given to communitities like the Lingayats where they are strong. There should be no nominated non-official members except as experts. A few official members may be added by the Governor as experts or to assist in representing the Executive Government.

4. The relations between the Executive Government and the Legislative Council so constituted should be roughly similar to those between the Imperial Government and the Reichstag in Germany. The Council will have to pass all Provincial Legislation and its assent will be necessary to adding to, or changes, in Provincial taxation. The Budget, too, will have to come to it, for discussion and its resolutions in connection with it, as also on questions of general administration, will have to be given effect to unless vetoed by the Goverenor. More frequent meetings or longer continuous sittings will have to be provided for. But the members of the Exective Government shall not depend, individually or collectivelly, on the support of a majority of the Council, for holding the offices.

5. The Provincial Government so reconstituted and

working under the control of the Legislative Council, as outlined above, should have complete charge of the internal administration of the Province and it should have virtually independent financial powers, the present financial relations between it and the Government of India being largely revised—and to some extent even reversed. The revenue under Salt, Customs, Tributes, Railways, Post, Telegraph and Mint should exclusively belong to the Government of India, the services being Imperial while under Land Revenue including Irrigation, Excise, Forests, Assessed Taxes, Stamps and Registration, should belong to the Provincial Government, the services being Provincial. As under this division, the revenue falling to the Provincial Government will be in excess of its existing requirements and that assigned to the Government of India will fall short of its present expenditure, the Provincial Government should be requried to make an annual contribution to the Government of India fixed for periods of five years at a time. Subject to this arrangement, the Imperial and Provincial Governments should develop their separate systems of finance, the Provincial Governments being giving powers of taxation and borrowing within certain limits.

6. Such a scheme of Provincial Autonomy will be incomplete unless it is accompanied by (a) liberalizing of the present form of District adminstration and (b) a great extension of Local Self-Government. For (a) it will be necessary to abolish the Commissionerships of Divisions except where special reasons may exist for their being maintained as in Sind and to associate small District Councils, partly elected and partly nominated, with the Collector to whom most of the present powers of the Commissioners could then be transferred—the functions of the Councils being advisory to begin with. For (b) Village Panchayats, partly elected and partly nominated, should be created for villages and groups of villages, and Municipal Boards in towns and Taluk Boards. The Taluk Boards should be made wholly elected bodies, the Pro-

vincial Government reserving to itself and exercising stringent powers of control. A portion of the excise revenue should be made over to those bodies so that they may have adequate resources at their disposal for the due performance of their duties. The District being too large an area for efficient local self-government by an honorary agency, the functions of the District Boards should be strictly limited and the Collector should continue to be its ex-officio President.

The Government of India

1. The Provinces being thus rendered practically autonomous, the constitution of the Executive Council or the Cabinet of the Viceroy will have to be correspondingly altered. At present there are four members in that Council with portfolios which concern the internal administration—Home, Agriculture, Education, and Industries and Commerce. As all internal administratiou will now be made over to the Provincial Governments and the Government of India will only retain in its hands nominal control to be exercised on very rare occasions, one member to be called Member for the Interior should suffice in place of the four. It will, however, be necessary to create certain other portfolios and I would have the Council consist of the following six members, at least two of whom shall always be Indians.

(a) Interior, (b) Finance, (c) Law, (d) Defence, (e) Communications, (Railways, Post and Telegraph), and (f) Foreign.*

The Legislative Council of the Viceroy should be styled the Legislative Assembly of India. Its members should be raised to about one hundred to begin with and its powers enlarged, but the principle of an official majority (for which perhaps it will suffice to substitute a nominated majority) should for the present be maintained until sufficient experience has been gathered of the working of autonomous arrangements

for the Provices. This will give the Government of India a reserve power in connection with Provincial administration to be exercised in emergencies. Thus, if a Provincial Legislative Council persistently declines to pass legislation which the Government regards to be essential in the vital interests of the Province, it could be passed by the Government of India in its Legislative Assembly over the head of the Province. Such occasions would be extremely rare, but the reserve power will give a sense of security to the authority and will induce them to enter on the great experiment of Provincial Autonomy with greater readiness. Subject to this principle of an official or nominated majority being for the present maintained, the Assembly should have increased opportunities of influencing the policy of the Government by discussion, questions connected with the Army and Navy being placed on a level with other questions. In fiscal matters, the Government of India so constituted should be freed from the control of the Secretary of State whose control in other matters too should be largely reduced, his Council being abolished and his position steadily approximated to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Commissions in the Army and Navy must now be given to Indians, with proper facilities for military and naval instruction.

German East Africa, if conquered from the Germans, should be reserved for Indian colonixation and should be handed over to the Government of India.

Appendix VI

(Gokhale, like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to name only two, underwent the important stage of municipal chairmanship in his public life).

Gokhale himself was President of the Poona Municipality for several years, and knew well the disadvantages and handicaps which hinder the progress of Indian muncipal life. In that capacity he showed a power of vigorous administration, which made his tenure of office memorable. The work of the municipal meetings over which he presided was done with thoroughness and despatch. He introduced a system by which the members of the municipality were permitted to interrogate the executive officers at the meetings on points of administration—the same system, in other words, of which he himself was to make such effective use in the Imperial Council after the introduction of the Minto-Morley Reforms. He also introduced a rule that the minutes of the municipal meetings should be printed and circulated to the members. His services to Poona as President of the municipality made it plain that Gokhale was no mere academic critic of other people's methods of administration, who would himself be helpless in a position of responsibility; but that he was a vigorous and practical administrator, able to translate his ideals into effective action.

J. S. Hoyland : *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*

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